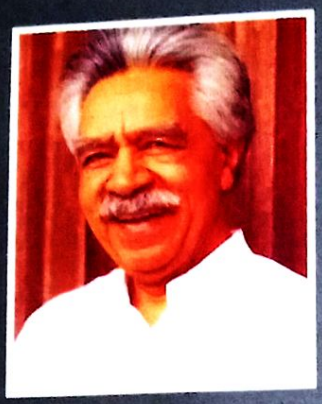
REMINISCENCES OF A JAMMUITE

SHIVANATH



About the Author

Shivanath (born at Jammu in 1925 is a Dogri scholar, writer and translator. He is a retired Member of Posts and Telegraphs Board and ex-office of additional secretary to the Government of India. His contributions on Dogri literature which placed it on the national scene appeared in journals like Kashmir Affairs Cultural Forum Quest, Indian Writing Today, The Kashmir Times, The Hindustan Times, Indian Literature and Indian Horizons. Besides the History of Dogri literature published by the Sahitya Akademi he has to his credit more than twenty publications. He was also associated with the Dogri section of the Sahtiya Akademi's prestigious projects 'Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature'. A history of Indian Literature and An Anthology of modern Indian Literature. Cheten Di Chitkabari a collection of his Dogri essays received the Sahitya Akademi award for the year 2004.

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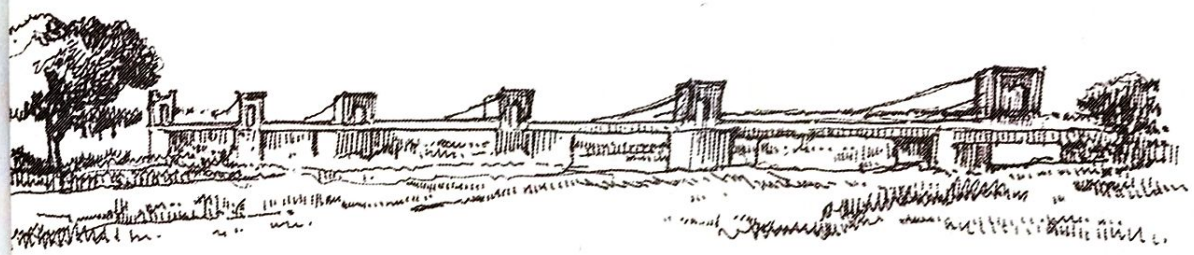

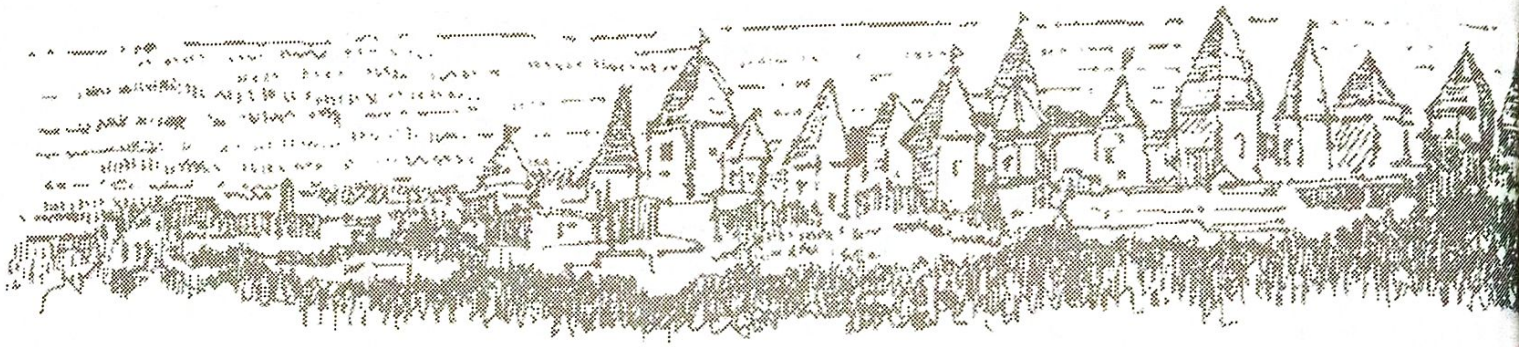

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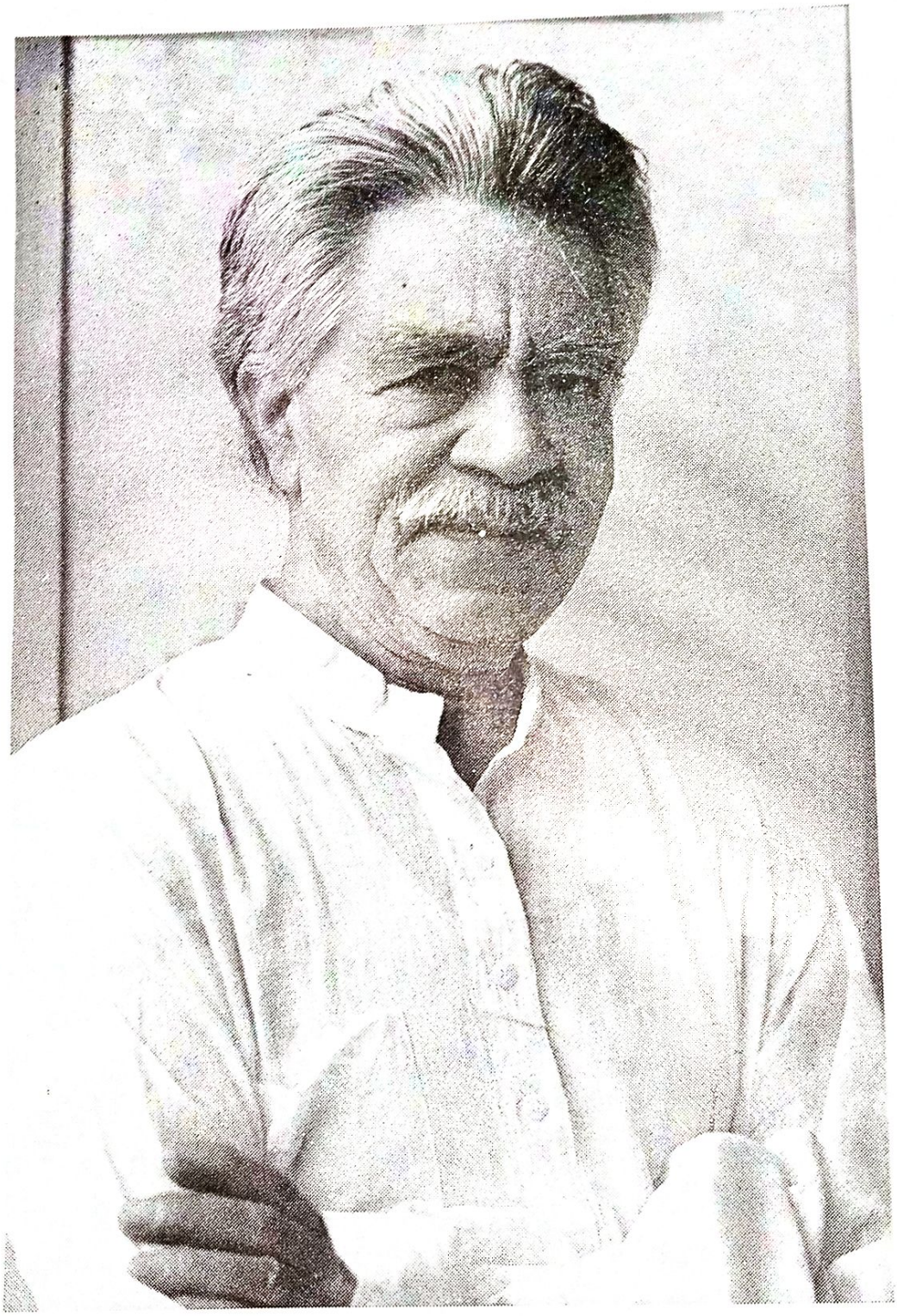


"If you have 15 minutes of life left what would you do? " asks St. Exupery in The Little Prince.

"I would slowly walk in the desert to the fountain of memory," answers the little prince, "I would look back at life and resurrect myself."

1

As I look back at my life, spread over the last three-quarters of the twentieth century and six years of the twenty first, I find that my memory is playing hide and seek on the field of my conscious. Memories of my childhood days look faded and faint. Still, some images of that period emerge from the subconscious and I can recollect them readily:

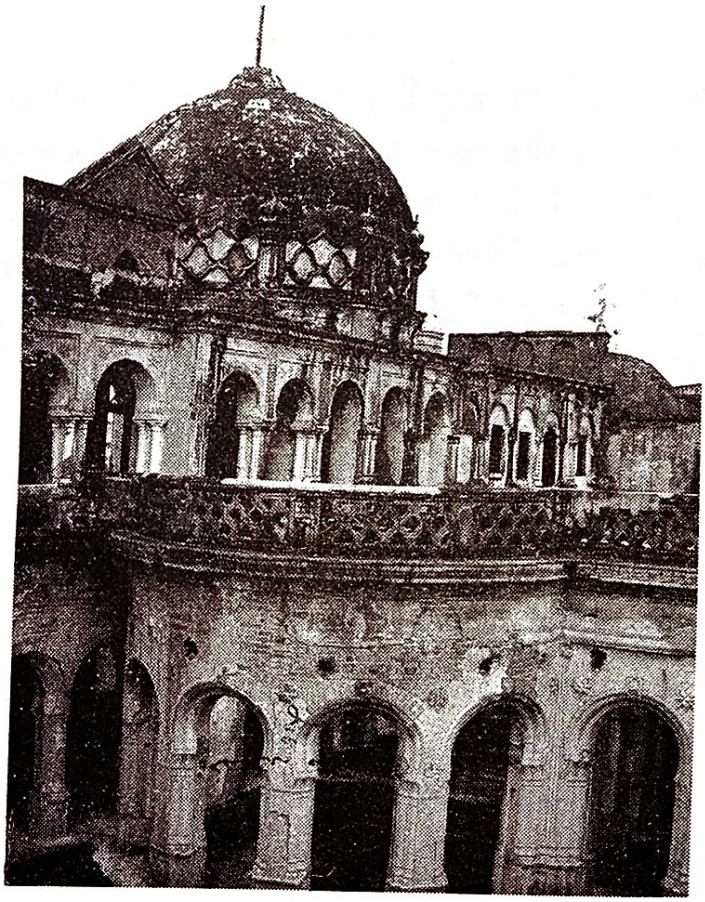
A single room tenement, where I was born and spent the first nine or ten years of my life – a windowless room in the outer wall of Ahaata Pratap Singh sandwiched between two similar rooms, one tenanted by a sitar-loving, meat-crazy, Muslim tailor master and the other by a saffron-robed, *bhakti*-mad, bearded, *tilak-dhari* godman; dulcet notes of sitar and odour of cooking meat mingled merrily with *bhajan*-singing and smell of incense floating in through the door;

My mother, short and frail, singing Krishna *bhajans* like *Kamal Nayana Stotra*, telling me anecdotes of Krishna's childhood pranks and about her pre-dawn

trips, with a friend, to the Tawi river for an early morning bath and rounds of the temples of Dhaunthali (Dharmasthali) on the way back; and

On my birthdays, opening her jewellery box, taking out my horoscope tied with a red *khammani*, which had a few knots around withered *kusha* grass and tying another knot around a few fresh grass leaves, signifying another completed year, in the presence of the priest who performed some *pooja*, putting a *tilak*, a vermilion mark on my forehead, feeding sweets to the priest and small kids of the neighbourhood and giving me *kheer* garnished with dry-fruits in a silver bowl;

My father, tall, robust and handsome, who had left for good his family and farmlands in the village of



Mubarak Mandi

Soaankha, some miles away from Jammu, because of a tiff with his elder brother's wife, who hob-nobbed with

Kanak Mandi

all kinds of wandering sadhus and sanyasis and finally settled down in Jammu with a temple allotted to him for his subsistence. He was taciturn by nature, with a detached outlook. I also remember his taking me perched on his shoulder through milling crowds to witness the open Dassehra Durbar in the city's parade ground, the band, the Maharaja's troops and the burning of effigies of Ravana, Kumbhakarna, Meghnad and Lanka;

My father narrating to me the munificence of Maharaja Pratap Singh and the details of the maharaja's processions, through the bazaars of Jammu, watched by crowds of citizens, especially the magnificient procession of the coronation of Maharaja Hari Singh, the nephew of Maharaja Pratap Singh, on 18th February 1926 (my first birthday). The celebrations of formal coronation of the new maharaja were reported to have lasted from the 18th February to the 9th March 1926 with the city of Jammu decorated and illuminated, a magnificent colourful procession led by golden caparisoned elephants moving from Mubarak Mandi to Purani Mandi for the

raj-tilak ceremony there on the 25th February and citizens crowding the bazaars enroute to watch the procession and another magnificent procession taken out in 1931, when the maharaja returned from abroad with Maharani Tara Devi and Yuvaraj, heir apparent, Karan Singh born in France in March that year. The maharajas of Jammu and Kashmir were known to share their joys, sorrows and achievements with Jammuites;

Two harijan friends – Sadhu Ram, very fair and docile, who died suddenly one day and Jagat Ram, with whom I shared a piece of *barfi*, a sweet made from milk and sugar, while watching *Raas-lila* performed by an itinerant *Raas-mandali* on a makeshift stage in Rehari mohalla;

Slipping in an attempt to clamber up a *gumati*, a raised platform on one side of the entrance gate of Ahaata Pratap Singh and bleeding from the wound on the outer edge of my left eye and my *naani* rushing to pick me up and applying a burnt piece of cloth to stop the bleeding, a simple home remedy for arresting bleeding, thereby creating a permanent identification mark;

Howling with pain from a scorpion bite on my foot and a uniformed soldier back from duty in Gilgit and billeted in the barracks inside the Ahaata passing in front, lifting me and rubbing iron on the sting;

Kite-running, jumping over the roofs of houses of influential Rajputs in the neighbourhood, getting a deep cut from the *maanja*, the kite string coated with finely ground glass, on the sole of my left foot and running home bleeding, followed by an irate, elderly Rajput who came to complain to my father, getting a scolding from my father, sulking and refusing to talk to him for a long time;

My securing the first position in studies from the first primary class itself and increasing encouragement

from my school teacher and parents to keep it up and continuous urging of our pet parrot, Ganga Ram, warbling day in and day out "*Shive, Bache, Utho, Parho,*" (Shiv, child, rise and read);

Absenting myself from an excursion organised by the school teacher where all the students were supposed to eat together and getting a slap from the teacher the next day, refusing to go to school, until the teacher himself came home and persuaded me to attend school;

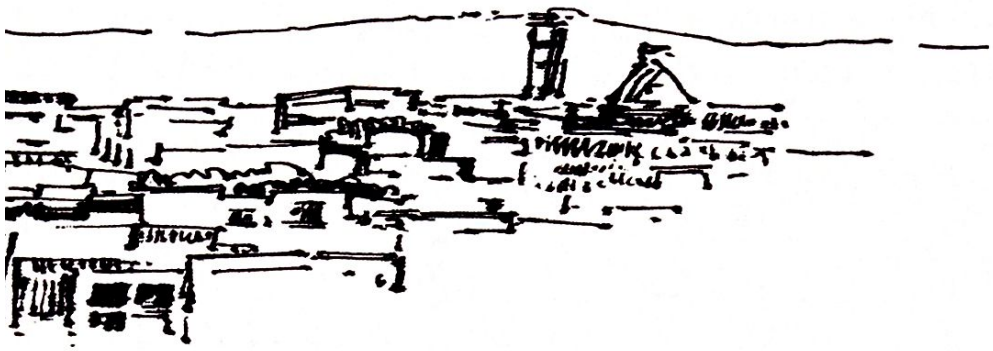
Diwali evenings with my parents at home, sitting in front of a newly-acquired glass-framed picture of some God or Goddess, *pooja*, sweets and sparklers and lighting of *divas*, earthen lamps;

Playing hockey with friends in the small ground in New Rehari and football in the extensive playground inside Ahaata Pratap Singh; and

Seeing *jathas*, bands of Muslim demonstrators in red shirts, marching down from Kachi Chhauni side, shouting slogans against the Maharaja's government, passing in front of our row of tenements to and from the end of the road.

Much later I learnt that soon after taking over, Maharaja Hari Singh had annoyed the British government in India by demanding closure of the British Residency in Srinagar and the British Political Agency in Gilgit, a place of strategic importance. His speech in the first Round Table Conference in London as a representative of the Chamber of Princes of India, which had undertones of nationalist sentiment, vexed them further. The British administration in India began to create troubles for him. Communal strife and disturbances in the State, which was known as *Dar-ul-Aman* (Haven of Peace), were engineered surreptitiously. Sentiments of Muslims in the State against the Hindu

Maharaja were instigated through false reports of the State Government's oppression of its Muslim subjects in English and vernacular papers in the Punjab, *jathas*, bands of Ahrar Muslims, from the border districts of the Punjab like Sialkot and Gujarat, entered the State and incited local Muslims who took out processions with slogan shouting. One Maulana Abdul Qadir from Uttar Pradesh, who happened to be in Srinagar with a foreign lady tourist whom he was teaching Urdu, made an inflammatory speech in Jama Masjid Srinagar on 31st July 1931 and gave a *fatwa*, "*Jo Haakim Zulam Karay, Oosko safaa-e-hasti say mitaa do*" (a ruler who oppresses his subjects should be finished off). The Muslim movement in the State, started in 1931, led to the foundation of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammed Abdulla, a schoolteacher in Srinagar, Kashmir. The agitation spread to all the districts of the State. It resulted in a breakdown of administration and increased British Government intervention in the State's administration. Peace was restored after a senior British officer of the Political department, Lt. Col. A. J. D. Kalon, was posted as the Prime Minister of the State and announcement regarding

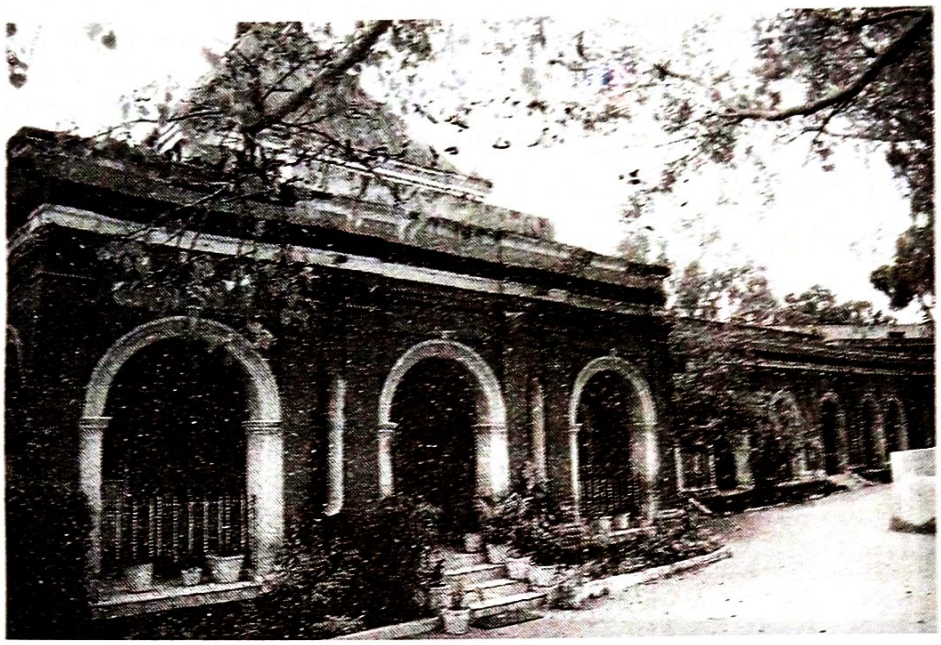


the setting up of a Commission under the Chairmanship of another British officer, Sir B. J. Glancy was made on 12th November, 1932.

In 1935, my father purchased a small plot of land in Rehari Mohalla – a predominantly Harijan colony with no more than half a dozen houses of upper caste Hindus, situated on the fringe of and within the municipal limits of Jammu city. The colony had a municipal councillor of *Mahasha* caste and a *lambardar*, headman, of *Megh* caste. While the municipal councillor, a dark-complexioned, tall and stout, middle-aged man had a pucca two-storeyed house and the public water tap outside his house, the *lambardar* was an elderly, fair looking, lean, mild-mannered and soft-spoken gentleman who spoke very little but whose talkative and fashion-conscious wife was fond of preening herself in fineries and going round to different households, prying into the affairs of others. At first my father got a *kacha* mud wall room built, to which a *pucca* regular brick wall room was added later and we moved into it – father, mother and myself – just the three of us. Instead of a boundary wall, we had thorny *thohar*, cacti, on which once or twice we found

discarded snake skin. The two rooms had an eight to nine feet wide courtyard in front which was periodically plastered with cow-dung paste, where we spread our cots for sleeping in the night under the open sky. On one side of it was an improvised, uncovered kitchen which never got a roof. There was open space in the courtyard where our cow Jamuna rested under a neem tree in the company of our pet parrot, Ganga Ram, whose cage was hung from one of its branches. Further down, there was some more space where we had our bath and experimented with growing vegetables like tomatoes, green chillies, radishes, spinach, coriander, mint and flower bushes of roses, jasmine and marigold. We did not have electricity and water connections; water had to be fetched from the public tap some distance away, on the public road.

That was the time when New Rehari was getting colonised. The State Government employees were allotted plots of land and several of them were quick to get pucca brick-and-mortar, well-designed houses ready for living. I came to know some children who were my age, became friendly with them and played with them. It is from this Rehari Mohalla home of mine that I started going to Sri Ranbir High School – negotiating a rough uneven narrow lane and stone-paved broader mohalla road, going down the *dhakki* from the *kabela* (the abattoir), crossing the *nallah*, going up the *dhakki* on the other side, past the huge ancient banyan tree on the top of the *dhakki*, which had a platform for passers-by and village folk bringing loads of their produce and bundles of firewood on the way to the city to rest on, passing through the Ahaata Pratap Singh on to the macadamised Shalimar Road and entering the school from its northern gate.



Ranbir High School

I joined Shri Ranbir High School in the sixth class. This high school was the first to have been established by Maharaja Ranbir Singh in the J&K State, sometime before 1890. Amaranth Khosla, the class teacher, introduced us to English with A, B, C .... A for Apple, B for Banana, C for Carrot. It was so different and so much more interesting than the *Alaf, Bay, Pay* that I learnt in first primary from a hard task master Abbas. Girdhari Lal, the drawing master at the far end of the small block of rooms detached from the main building, taught us how to draw and colour these fruits. Sparsely built, sleek and darkish complexioned, smartly dressed in pants and coat with a matching tie, Amarnath was a remarkable teacher with persuasive, charming manners who became instantly popular with his students and created interest in the subjects he taught. He was with us for hardly a couple of months when he was taken away to be the tutor to the heir-apparent, Yuvaraj Karan Singh. We missed him and felt bad about his transfer.

While our drawing master, Girdhar Lal, was sweet tempered, suave and soft-spoken, the physical training

instructor, a tall, stout ex-serviceman Pathan with crew cut greying and thinning hair, thickset neck, broad shoulders and chest was too loud with his commands in a stentorian voice which shook the atmosphere. One day, when our class was out doing P.T., I and another boy Tarlok Chand were left behind in the classroom to keep a watch over satchels and odd belongings of the students. We started making paper balloons but our repeated blowings were infructuous and our cheeks turned red and began to burn when suddenly Tarlok burst into laughter and we both laughed nonstop until the room echoed with our laughter. Thereafter whenever we were face to face, we laughed involuntarily without either of us uttering a word. Slowly, our acquaintance grew into friendship. Tarlok, the son of the Head of the Department of Mathematics in the Prince of Wales College, became my first enduring friend.

I remember our Urdu teacher – tall and lanky, in a white *shalwar*, light green *sherwani* and white turban tied tight over a *kulla* and our Sanskrit teacher, an easy going, slow-witted Panditji in a loose-fitting long coat and slovenly movements who slouched and dozed off sitting in the chair after introducing the lesson from the Sanskrit primer which bore the picture of the Yuvaraj on a light blue frontispiece cover. Both these language teachers made us laugh in our sleeves – the Maulavi Sahab with his utterance of an unprintable word and the Pandit with his snoring. The class teacher in the eighth class, one Dev Dutt Mengi, was always immaculately dressed in tight fitting white Dogra *chooridar* showing his calf muscles to advantage, well-pressed *sherwani*, turban and polished shoes. He had a peculiar way of addressing the students – "boys", a beautiful smile on his lips and a twinkle in his eyes.

The teacher of General Knowledge, which included a study of history and geography, bare-headed

Master Bakshi, in pants, striped tweed coat and red tie or sometimes a red muffler, with betel and tobacco stained teeth, was another interesting teacher.

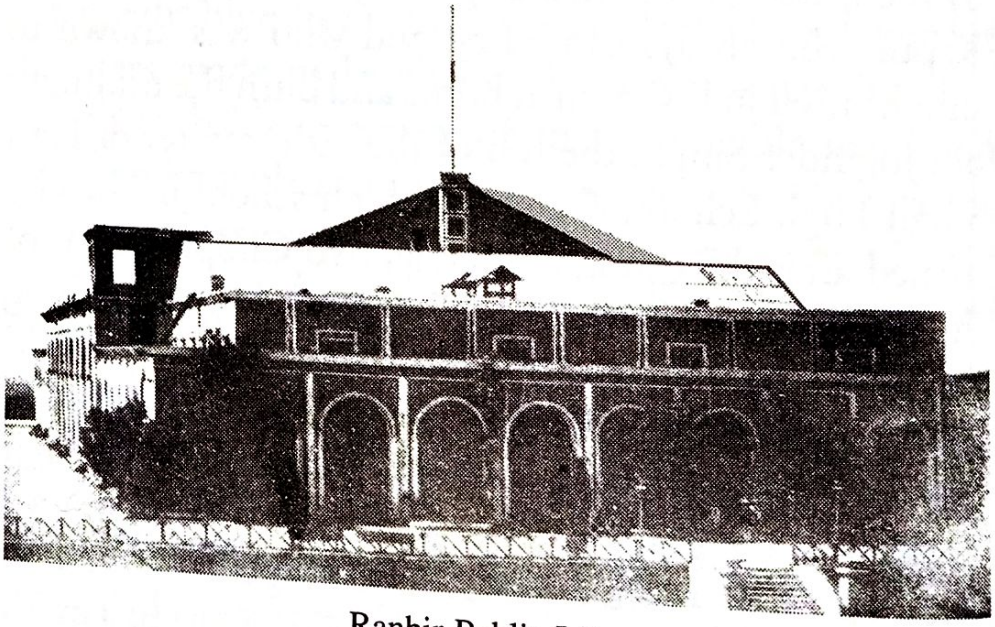
In the 9th and 10th classes, I was monitor of my section – Section D. The responsibility of maintaining discipline in the class whenever the teacher was away for short periods, fell on me and I managed to maintain peace by making a class fellow, Rameshwar, who had a very sweet voice, sing songs to us.

The teacher in the 9th and 10th classes that I loved and admired most was Thakar Prithi Singh – a tall, well-built, typical Dogra, straight from the village, with a loosely tied turban, long coat, Dogra *chooridar pyjama* and shoes which did not appear to have been touched by polish at all. Out of the classroom, one could take him for a rural rustic, walking like one. But in the classroom he was brilliant – reeling off exercises in direct/indirect, active/passive, transitive/intransitive. After Master Amarnath had laid the foundation of my interest in and knowledge of English, it was Master Prithi Singh who firmed it up with exercises in English grammar. The Headmaster of the high school was one Khushi Ram, whose son Manmohan had also become my friend by then, along with other bright boys like Shyam Sunder Kapur who always came first and who was known to shut himself in his room at home and burn the midnight oil, Joginder Singh, the son of the Headmaster of Hari Singh High School, the second high school in the city named after the ruling Maharaja, two Chopras, sons of the Governor of Jammu .... But more popular among the students was the Second Master Narsingh Das Suri – a very impressive personality, in very neatly tied turban, light grey *achkan,* Dogra *chooridar*, eyes shining through thin-rimmed glasses. His soft, loving manner of interaction with students evoked respect. Sometime before the final matriculation examination, the first exam

to be conducted under the Punjab University to which our school was affiliated, Master Suri picked up two or three bright students from each of the four sections of the 10th class and made special arrangements for their pre-examination coaching. I was one of them.

After the school closed, I made my final preparations for the matriculation examination on the stairs of Ajaibghar tank situated to the west of the school across the Shalimar Road, sandwiched between Ajaibghar which housed a sort of museum and the city's public library and *Zenana Bagh*, the ladies park. There was the cool shade of tall trees, fragrant breeze from the *maulsiri* trees of the ladies park and the silence of seclusion, ideal for concentration. Now the tank lies buried under the massive, multi-storeyed Government Secretariat building.

After the matriculation examination was over, I felt a strange sense of lassitude, a sadness and emptiness. But the mind was not completely empty. In it floated some remembrances of days spent in the school, extracts of lessons committed to memory, faces of class fellows and teachers, reminders of happenings; they seemed to come and land, like birds from the sky and then got lost



Ranbir Public Libray

in the shadows of sad expanse of unnameable vacuum. Some lines of verse from Parkinson's *Selections of English Verse* rose to the surface of consciousness – lines from Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade", "Sohrab and Rustam", "Casabianca", "Persevere and Try again". Imagination conjured up images of six hundred soldiers of the Light Brigade marching into the jaws of death, Sohrab and Rustam, Casabianca doing duty on the deck of the burning ship and of King Bruce of Scotland, learning the lesson of trying again and again from a spider. Sadness also stemmed from loss of relationship with the school which was a home away from home, where we felt safe in the warmth of relationships. Slate strips lining the sloping roof of the School Hall lent a certain distinction to the school and we felt proud of this alma mater.

The back gate of the school opened on to the city's parade ground, heart of the city, where we had our P.T. parade and games and relaxation during free periods. With roasted peanuts in our pockets we watched football matches – Janak Singh, fullback of the Rajput School and lean and lanky goalkeeper Chaudhary's splendid kicks and games of cricket in which a short stocky Peeto hit sixes. It is in this parade ground that the golden voiced K. L. Sehgal was reported to have done *riaz*, singing practice.

After the exam, I made it my habit to go for my morning walks on the Banihal Cart Road, also known as Ramnagar Road, up to the 3rd bridge with iron railings. Ramnagar forest had a large number of trees of various kinds, including *phlahi* trees and small water ponds here and there. I would cut a *phlahi* twig, remove the thorns and make a *datun*, a toothbrush, put it in my mouth relishing its sweetness, ease myself in the open environment and as I returned, the

atmosphere would be magical – the sun emerging from behind the low hills on the other side of the Tawi, colouring the river waters silver, rising up slowly, making the green leaves of trees shine and sparkle. In March-April, *brainhkar* would be blooming, with white, honey-filled flowers, *phlahi* would also be flowering spreading intoxicating fragrance. Here and there one could see *kachnar* trees with purple and whitish flowers and *tesu* trees with flame-red flowers. Coming home, I would caress Jamuna, our cow, tied to the tree in the *kacha* compound and Ganga Ram, our parrot, sitting in its cage. My mother had taught it to recite, "*Shive, Bache, Utho, Parho*" (Shiv, child, rise, read). And obeying its command, I took to reading with a passion – borrowing books from some friends, sitting in the Public Library every evening and glancing through papers and magazines – the dailies *Amrit Bazaar Patrika* from Calcutta and *The Tribune* and *The Civil and Military Gazette* from Lahore and the periodicals *Modern Review*, *The Indian Review* and *Vishwabharati*, in English and *Madhuri*, *Vishal Bharat* and *Saraswati* in Hindi. I liked the editorials of *Amrit Bazaar Patrika* for their crisp language and nationalist views.

In two months, between 31st March and 30th May, 1941, I read eleven books – two in Urdu, four in Hindi and five in English. I liked *Kele ka Chhilka*, a collection of humorous essays by Sindbad Jahazi in Urdu, *The War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells in English and *Vedanuvachan* by Baba Nagina Singh Atmadarshi (496 pages, price Rs. 2) and *Param Hans Swami Ramtirth* by Ram Chandra Bharadwaj (Pp.448, price Re.1 annas 12). But the book that I loved and learnt a lot from was *At the Feet of the Master*, a little baby book written by Alcyone (J. Krishnamurti) as dictated by the Master and published

by the Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras with a brief preface by Annie Besant. It began with an invocation in bold Sanskrit letters "*Asato Ma Sad Gamaya* with the English translation in small letters:

"From the unreal lead me to the Real
From darkness lead me to Light
From death lead me to Immortality"

In the foreword, the writer mentions four qualifications for success in life, viz. Discrimination, Desirelessness, Good Conduct and Love and elaborates them in the main text. Discrimination means discrimination between right and wrong, important and unimportant, useful and useless, true and false, selfish and unselfish. Desirelessness means the absence of desire for things like wealth, power, fruit of action, desire to shine or to appear clever. Good Conduct has the following elements – Self control in mind and action, tolerance and cheerfulness, one-pointedness and confidence. The writer considers Love as the most important qualification and it means not to hurt any living thing and avoid three sins against love – gossip, cruelty and superstition – and not to think of the evil in another.

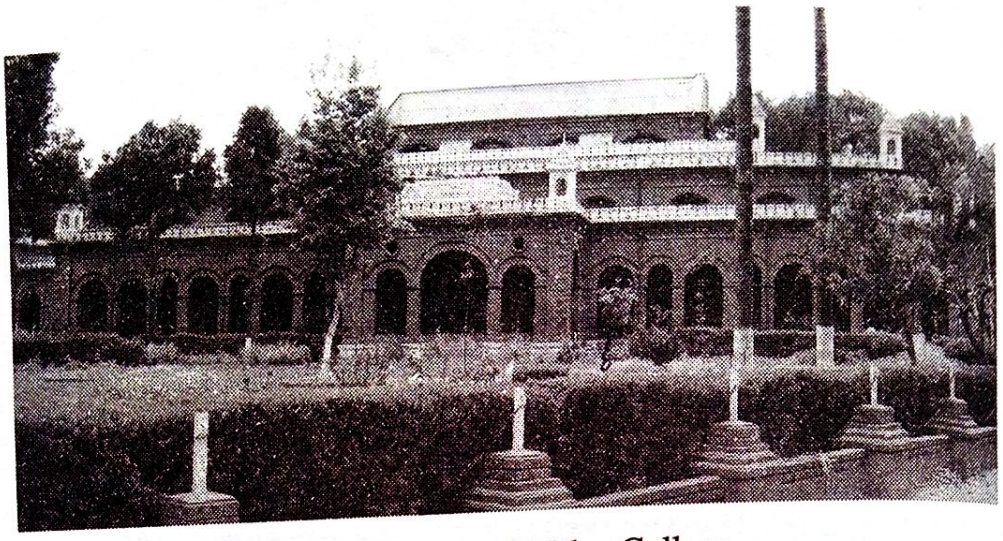
This little book was a gift to me from Dr. Sri Ram, the Chief Scout Commissioner of Jammu and Kashmir State, whom I had assisted as a volunteer in distributing free medicines in quarters of the poor in the city visited by some epidemic. He also induced me to subscribe to a magazine *The Young Citizen*, edited by the Bharatanatyam dancer Rukmini Devi Arundale and published by the Theosophical Society, Adyar, Madras.

The results of Matriculation examination had a surprise for me – I had secured the highest marks, not only from my high school but also from all the

government high schools in the State. It paved the way for further studies. Education in the State was free; only a small amount of four to eight annas per month had to be paid for extra-curricular activities. English was a compulsory subject. From among elective subjects I opted for Mathematics, Sanskrit and Economics. Getting textbooks was a problem. I purchased some second hand books and borrowed some. The prescribed book for Economics was given to me by the elder brother of a friend who also introduced me to his parents and got me tuition work, teaching his two sisters. On the very first day in the Prince of Wales College, the only college in Jammu at that time, I was accosted by a fair complexioned youth, "Shiv" as though he had known me for long. Extending his hand towards me, he introduced himself as "Amarendra". I liked it and we became friends. He had come from a Public School, Bisco Memorial, in Srinagar or The Model Academy, Jammu. The next day, Tarlok Chand Gupta, my old friend from Sri Ranbir High School introduced me to his cousin Jai Bhagwan who had come from Jagadhari in the Punjab, also with more marks than mine. Amarendra got Roll No. 1, Jai Bhagwan Roll No. 2 and I was pushed down to Roll No. 3 in the First Year class.

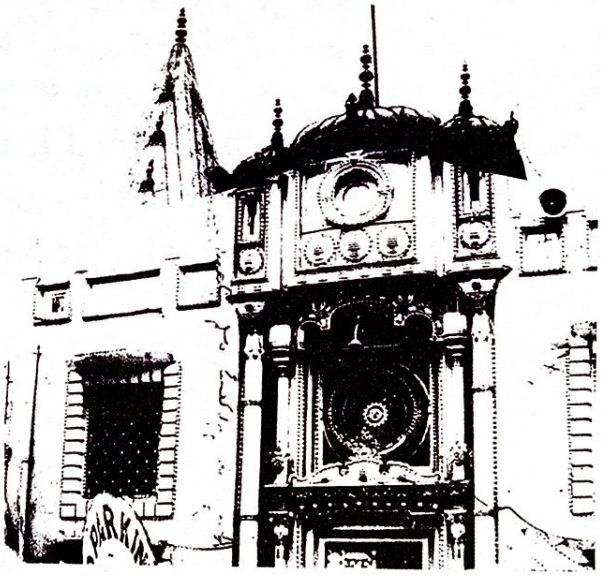
2

Prince of Wales College was the highest educational institution in Jammu when I joined it in the first year in 1941. It had started functioning on 20 April 1907 in what was known as the Ajaibghar building, got specially designed and built by Maharaja Ranbir Singh (1856-1885 AD) for the stay of the then Prince of Wales, the heir-apparent of Queen Victoria of England (Edward the Eighth) during his two-day visit to Jammu. It had been shifted to its present premises on the sixty five acre plot of land near the cold water canal from the river Chenab on the 18th September 1912. It was a very fine institution with salubrious surroundings – open spaces, tall, tastefully planted trees, well kept playgrounds and tennis courts, a cool water-channel from the canal with grassy embankment under shady trees, a well-stocked library with a genial helpful librarian and his assistant, a well-sited hostel in the rear, highly respected, dignified, conscientious teachers who loved learning and teaching and a vibrant intellectual atmosphere which spilled over



Prince of Wales College

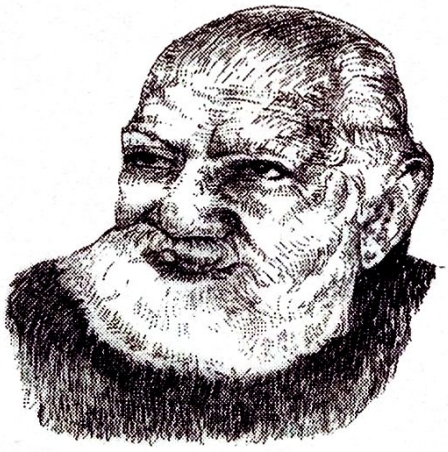
and created a ripple effect on the cultural and literary life of the city in which life otherwise flowed rather placidly, evenly and calmly. Men plied their professions and trades, Hindu women went to the various temples of the city of temples and boys and girls went to schools.



Raghunath Temple Gate

Football matches in the city parade ground and Rajput School ground created some excitement. Dassehra celebrations in the parade ground drew crowds and in summer, people from the city and even Sialkot in the Punjab, flocked to the banks of the cold water canal. Bathing in the canal and sucking fresh mango juice from small sized *choosa* mangoes chilled in baskets dipped in the cool waters of the canal was a delectable experience.

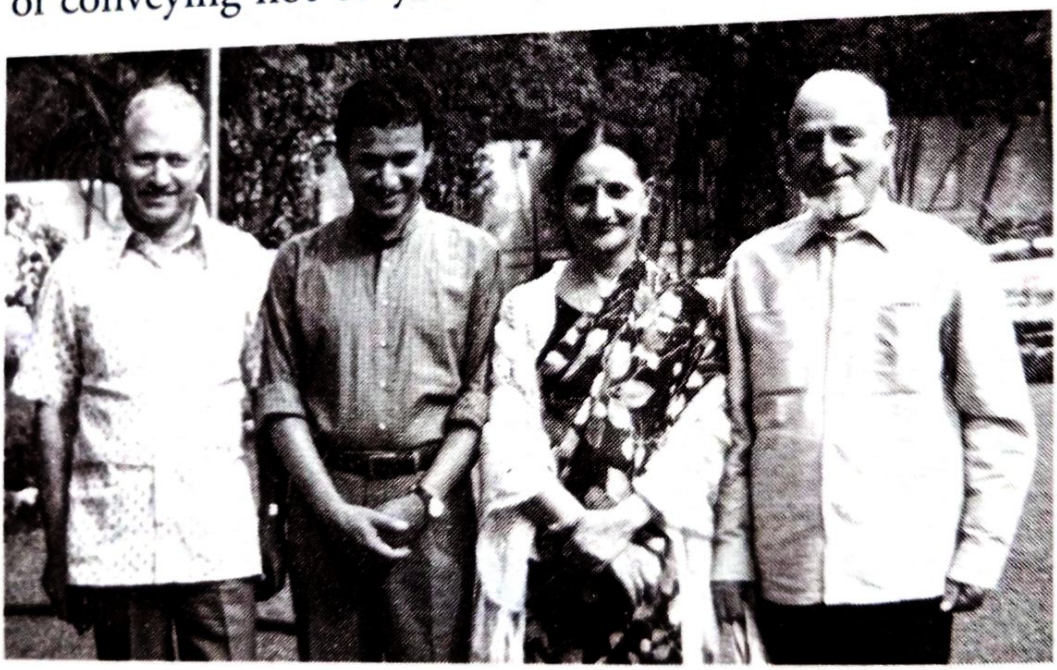
The college had an English Reading Forum, a Science and Culture Club, a Hindi Sahitya Parishad, a Bazme-Urdu and a Punjabi Sahit Sabha but no Dogri literary society. I served as secretary of the English Reading Forum and the Hindi Sahitya Parishad. Professors Ram Nath Shastri and P. N. Pushp who had recently joined the college and took active part in the Hindi Sahitya Parishad meetings, made significant contributions to the literatures of their mother tongues Dogri and Kashmiri respectively, later. The college teachers and students had close associations with the Prince of Wales College City Club which organised lectures and talks in Sri Ranbir High School hall. Prominent citizens of Jammu also participated in its sessions. I remember Dr. Siddeshwar Varma's lecture on "My Linguistic Hunt in the Himalayas" and Prof. Jai Lal Kaul's illustrated talk on the lyrics of Lal Ded, a Kashmiri poetess.



Dr. Siddeshwar Varma

Dr. Siddeshwar Varma and Prof. Jai Lal Kaul were the teachers who impressed me most. Dr. Varma, who taught us Sanskrit, was a towering figure, a unique and outstanding personality. With his huge bulk and protruding paunch draped in a long, buttoned-up coat, white *chooridars*, white turban and thick glasses, he looked majestic. In the class, he roared like a lion, made

faces while enunciating some words correctly and the wooden platform creaked and squeaked under his feet as he paced on it from side to side. He was a performer par excellence who seemed to enjoy his performance in the class, holding his students spell-bound, riveted to their seats. He would take a whole week to illustrate one *sloka* of Shrimad Bhagavad-Gita. He was a stickler for punctuality and people in the city set their watches by him. Prof. Jai Lal Kaul taught us English poetry and had a very charming, interesting and effective way of teaching and a session in his class was a joyful, enriching experience. He communicated the meaning and mood of a poem with his reading itself, without having to explain every word, phrase and metaphor. Nourished on the love lyrics of Kashmir, he had an inimitable knack of conveying not only the feel and flavour of lines but



Prof. J.L. Kaul (Extreme Right)

also the passion and creative mood of the poet behind the lines. For example, when he read out, with obvious relish, Keats's Ode, "Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast ..." his relish, the twinkle in his eye and the smile on his lips gave wings to our imagination and awakened our senses to intimations of moist intimacies.

Prof. Kaul introduced me to *King's Treasuries* – world classics in simple English prose edited by Sir Arthur Quiller Couch, available in the College Library and created in me lasting love for English literature. He put me through the initial paces towards writing for the college magazine *The Tawi* and the college weekly of which I eventually became the editor during my third year in the college. He lent me books, even books like *Iqbal's Educational Philosophy*, borrowed from the personal library of Dr. K. G. Saiaidain, the then director of Education in the State, who later became Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Education, under Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad. He also advised me to keep a diary to record my moods, feelings and experiences and a scrap book to note down things I read and liked. I owe it to these two remarkable teachers of mine in the first two years of my college education that I secured a position, got University scholarship on the results of the inter-arts examination and received two gold medals – one instituted by the Maharaja of Alwar and the other by one Mr. Roy, for getting the highest marks in English and Sanskrit combined in the B. A. degree examination of the Punjab University.

Prof. Kaul was particularly kind to me. In August 1942, when he was vacationing in Srinagar, I wrote to him thanking him for improving my first article which appeared in *The Tawi* and informing him about my extra-study. His reply was full of wholesome advice:

> *"Yes, I re-touched your article to give you a mild surprise and to tell you, what is important to learn, that you can make a small incident of everyday occurrence very amusing and significant. Will you read:* Alpha of the Plough – 1st series, 2nd

series, 3rd series – *3 volumes? Who is this Alpha of the Plough? It is the pen name of Mr. A. G. Gardiner. Read his essays, they should help you to write little amusing studies on trifling things, to get the most out of ordinary events.*

Please do keep me informed of your extra-study. I don't like you to read nonsense like Ten Plagues of Modern Civilisation *by that Female Hoax, Tandra Devi. What do you know of civilisation to be plagued with its ten plagues? Modern civilisation is not and cannot be ideal but the past civilisation was much worse and responsible for ten times ten plagues. You say you like these ten essays. I don't doubt it; but I know it is easy to like to read about these "plagues" if one hasn't got say:*

1. A fine house, fitted with telephones, sanitaryfittings and flush system, hot and cold baths, heating and cooling apparatus and other modern scientific inventions of domestic comfort;
2. A fine motor car which can carry you wherever you like in the twinkling of an eye, as it were;
3. Money enough to travel round the world, in a ship or by air in a plane;
4. A fine library stocked with books from all countries and climes, everyday enriched with thought and culture of other people,
5. Not to speak of hospitals and means of knowledge, telescopes and microscopes.

Please don't be disturbed by these "plagues". It is the bounden duty of every mother's child in India to strive to raise the standard of life, of comfort and well-being, to talk more of the good things of civilisation than of the plagues of civilisation.

I don't, however, deny that civilisation has its share of plagues. But I would far rather suffer these plagues than the mud huts and bubonic plagues and appalling poverty and more appalling ignorance and stupidity and slavery and superstitions of our country.

Now about your difficulty in answering questions in the examination. My impression of your central ideas is the best in your class and I think you do them very well indeed. This doesn't mean that practice will not improve your writing. It surely will. Paraphrase is not well taught in schools and colleges, the reason being chiefly that few teachers and professors know what paraphrase is and means and how it should be done profitably. I should be glad to go through and suggest corrections and improvements wherever necessary to your composition. But I will not write model answers. They are useless, from my point of view. I don't wish you to cram.

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and all other things shall be added unto thee" says the Bible and this will be true also if you substitute "knowledge" for "Kingdom

of Heaven" and add the words "and marks" after "things" and before "shall be". So don't worry. Do as I tell you and you will get as many marks as you wish. Marking in an examination is at best arbitrary. I should have asked you to read an essay on An Examination of Examinations *by Sir Philip Hasting, an eminent Educationist, but you won't get the book at Jammu.*

Sd/-

J.L. Kaul"

I found Prof. Zutshi, who had joined the college after doing his Tripos in Mathematics from Cambridge University, U. K., also very helpful. In his reply to my letter which posed the question: "What is the use of Mathematics?" he waxed eloquent about its usefulness and the abuses of other subjects:

Nawab Bazaar
Srinagar
August 4, 1942.

"My dear Shivanatha,

I must thank you for your very sweet letter which, besides being intelligently worded, was also thought-provoking. A prompt acknowledgement of such a letter is irresistible.

"What is truth" asked the jesting Pilate and washed his hands clean off the guilt of crucifying Christ. Let us not be complacent like Pilate and succeed for awhile in sealing the lips of our adversary by uttering a truth or a half-truth. We are the worshippers of

The Deity called Mathematics. She expects us to spread her cult far and wide. We, the true servants of Mathematics, can conquer the world by removing prejudices and cant against our just cause. Let us face all opposition squarely and candidly. It has become the fashion of the day to jeer at Mathematics. A person never thinks himself cultured unless he has a fling at us. The venerable gentleman's question was "What use is Mathematics". With his kind permission, let us put the same question differently – a process of simplification, you must admit – and the onus of proving what he set out to disprove falls on him: "What use is any other subject excepting Mathematics?" You will realise that the whole complexion of his question changes. By "use" let us mean "usefulness" in the larger, wider and nobler sense of the term. Take Chemistry: This has made the whole world immoral. One half of the humanity is trying to efface the other half by chemical warfare on the battlefields of Europe. Archimedes, a true mathematician, gave the world a method by which to distinguish baser gold from real gold, but the chemist who manufactured lethal gases like chlorine, phosgene, lewisite and yprite paves the way for Hitlers and Mussolinis to send thousands of men, women and children to smouldering death. This is the blessing of your Chemistry. This is its "usefulness". Granted that you can operate

upon a person for appendicitis by putting him to sleep by $ChCl_3$ (chloroform), but what about the whole populace of London being put to sleep by spreading a fog of $ChCl_3$ and then blasting them out of existence by dropping high explosive bombs – again the creation of Chemistry – on them from the air. Take Physics: I think the greatest mischief done to mankind is traceable to Physics. Its horrors are untold. Mathematicians taught physicists how to fly, how to go under water, how to walk and how to crawl; but never did we teach them to indulge in malpractice. For whatever they discovered, we supplied them the explanation. We told them about the atoms and electrons. We forestalled them at every footstep. Yet, they got unhinged from their moorings. They became the Devil's disciples. Our conscience is clear, the weapons we used were most inoffensive e.g. Newton's 3rd law of motion, Mu = m v. M, m are the masses and u, v are the velocities. In the devil's (physicists') language this means a gun and a bullet. The gun (M) recoils with velocity u and the bullet (m) leaves the muzzle of the gun with a velocity v – sufficient to pierce the thickest armour plate. This is the "usefulness" of Physics.

Take Biology: A sensational discovery that some biologist isolates a plague germ followed by an equally sensational discovery that a bottle containing millions of such

germs has been stolen from the biologist's laboratory. Silence for six years .... And then the hair-raising news that Hitler is going to pollute the water supply in London by emptying the bottle containing the plague germs in the water reservoir. Result – instantaneous, devastating horrible death is let loose on millions of innocent people who know nothing about the biologist, his plague germs or the missing bottle.

The less said about other subjects the better. Just a word about your literature – the much talked of boast of sleepy pedants and imbecile pedagogues. I think all the lies and falsehoods perpetrated on unsophisticated fellows like us are blessings of literature. Speaking personally, whenever I want to go to sleep, I read Shakespeare!

Mathematics alone has a divine touch about it. That is why God must be 3/4^{ths} mathematician. We alone believe in ultimate reality. We alone strive to understand the Truth. No other subject has excited me as much as the solution of a difficult problem on maths. I've found that all other subjects are repulsively ugly and intolerably dull.

Let us dismiss for a moment the sinister by-products of Mathematics e.g. Physics and fix our attention on the real thing – pure Mathematics. It is true that real mathematics has no direct "utility" in a life

of rupees, annas and pies. I am glad that this is so, because it keeps one science at least remote from ordinary human activities thereby keeping it gentle and clean. Let us hope that our brother philosophers: the physicist, the biologist, the chemist, the historian, the economist and the litterateur will realise the futility of the paths they are pursuing and march with us shoulder to shoulder towards that goal – the Nirvana, the twin name of Mathematica, the living abode of that master mathematician – God.

I hope you are well. I am so glad that you have started work in right earnest. I hope the above will help you in approaching Mathematics with a clear conscience.

So much for the present. With a warm handclasp.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/- P. N. Zutshi

Teachers like Dr. Varma, Prof. Kaul and Prof. Zutshi were really inspiring and I learnt a lot from them.

I had a good set of friends during the first two years in the College – Shyam Sunder Kapur, Tarlok Chand Gupta and Narayana Dutt Misra who had come with me from Shri Ranbir High School, Amarendra Kaul and Jai Bhagwan Gupta, Roll Nos. 1 and 2, Pran Nagpal who came from the coalfields of Bihar and a couple of others. We talked about books, politics, political leaders and happenings in the world, developments in the Second World War, the "Quit India" call of Mahatma Gandhi and so on.

Amarendra & Lila

There was an air of romance in the College due to the presence of a few girls – we had thirteen of them in our class. Boys and girls came to this only co-educational institution from exclusive boys' and girls' high schools, at an age when interest in and attraction towards the opposite sex was natural. We talked about girls and referred to some of them by fictitious names – e.g. G-1 was "Symbol of Jammu and Kashmir Unity" because her mother was Dogra and father Kashmiri, G-3 was "*Kuhagi*", a kind of dove – clad in white khadi with alert and restless eyes, G-4 was "Jhalli" because of her way of walking, G-7 fair, tall and overbearing was "Kaaley Khan" because she came to the college in Kaaley Khan's well-maintained *tonga* pulled by a well-groomed horse. Everyone – from professors to students – came to the college on foot and she was the only one who came in a tonga. Roll No. 1 and G-4 fell in love with each other during this period and eventually married after a long wait in the teeth of opposition from the girl's parents.

The passion for reading that I had developed after the matriculation examination, continued unabated and I borrowed books right and left – from friends, from the Ranbir Public Library and the Prince of Wales College Library. During this period, I read more than seventy books – both non-fiction and fiction – most of them in English and some in Hindi and Urdu and I noted in the scrap book the title of the book, name of the author, dates when I read each book, the source from where I got it and a very brief description of the contents.

Lila & Amarendra

Among the books of non-fiction read by me were *Brotherhood of Religions* edited by Annie Besant, *Hints for Self Culture* by Har Dayal, *Our India* by Minu Masani, a book on Mahatma Gandhi edited by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, *Nehru – The Rising Star of India* by Anup Singh, *The Indian Leaders* by Yusuf Meharaly, *Democracy Upgraded* by Stafford Cripps, *Ten Plagues of Modern Civilisation*, *Fifty-two Ways to be Rich*, *The Wonders of Animal Life*, *Amusing Stories for Speakers*. For fiction, my main source was the College Library, although some classmates also loaned me books like

The Merchant of Venice by Shakespeare, *The Three Musketeers* and *The Lady with the Camellias* by Alexander Dumas, *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens and *Cranford Society* by Mrs. Gaskell. The books borrowed from the College Library included *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, *Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe, *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift, *Don Quixote* by Cervantes, *Pilgrim's Progress* by Bunyan, *Fairy Tales* by Hans Christian Anderson, *Bee – The Princess of Dwarfs* by Anatole France, *Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer, *Travels with a Donkey* by R. L. Stevenson and *The Good Earth* by Pearl S. Buck. In Hindi, I read Prem Chand's eight works including his magnum opus *Godan* and Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya's *Srikaant* and Chekov's short stories in translation. A book in Urdu which I enjoyed reading was *Pataras ke Mazameen* by Ahmed Shah Bukhari who also taught English in Govt. College, Lahore. While the books of non-fiction widened my horizons about religions and different branches of knowledge and put me wise about the Indian national scene and India's prominent political leaders, animal life and cases of success in career, fiction opened magic casements to the charmed and engrossing world of imagination, fairyland, adventure, romance, humour. Both together enriched the mind and the heart.

The Science and Culture Club organised lectures by college professors on different subjects like "The Study of Heavens". "How Mountains Grow", "Islam and Modern Science", "Postwar Economic Reconstruction", "Time and Space in Literature", "The Literature of tomorrow", "New Trends in Hindi Literature", etc. All these lectures were later compiled

in a volume entitled *Discourses* by the Club's convenor, Prof. J. L. Kaul and published with an introduction by Dr. K. G. Saiaidain.

Our group of students took active part in the deliberations of this Club which offered rich intellectual fare and provided another extra source for expanding our knowledge.

On the last day of classes before the Intermediate Examination, our group of about ten boys met in the "Oval" lawn in front of the porch of the College. In this meeting, Amarendra Kaul made a moving speech ending with the pronouncement, "Shivanath is a silent, solid worker who will be the cock of the College and win laurels for it." I was embarrassed and intrigued. Why did he say that? He was my dearest friend during these two years – he was the top student. And there were at least half a dozen other students who were as good, if not better than me – Jyoti Sarup Gupta in Mathematics, Chandra Mauli in Sanskrit, Shyam Sunder Kapur in Economics, not to speak of those who were good in other subjects.

Pran Nagpal and I made preparations for the University examination together. He would come to my place and we would walk down the Banihal Cart Road, also known as *reshamgharwali sadak*, the silk factory road, past the circuit house and rows of eucalyptus trees, enter the Raulaki Rakh forest reserve, find a grassy patch under shady trees and settle down to revise our lessons. Raulaki Rakh, one of the three lungs of the city of Jammu, with its trees, groves, grassy patches and rainwater pools has disappeared giving place to Bakshi Nagar – a densely populated, haphazardly grown, bustling colony, bursting at the seams, named after a former Chief Minister of the J&K State.

After the examinations were over, I would

sometimes go to Pran's house in Mohalla Afghana, to savour the potato-*parathas* soaked in pure *desi ghee* his Biji, his mother, used to prepare and to borrow some books from his personal collection like *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens in English and *Chitralekha by* Bhagwati Charan Varma, *Chand Haseenon ke Khatoot* by Pandeya Bechan Sharma Ugra and the poetry of *chhayavadi* poets Sumitranandan Pant, Mahadevi Verma and Harivansh Rai Bachhan in Hindi. I went to the Ranbir Public Library almost daily to read the newspapers and magazines and borrow books. I liked Y. G. Krishnamurti's piece on Jawahar Lal Nehru – "An idealist of tomorrow, with the power of living in the present, an Aryan in the deepest sense of the term and called to reconcile and respect a synthesis of cultures, Jawahar Lal is the crown and consummation of India's genius and patriotism."

Anxiously awaited result of the Intermediate (F.A./ FSc.) examination brought a surprise and a boon – top position in the Jammu and Kashmir State and fifth position in the Punjab University with 531 marks out of 650 and a University scholarship. A postcard from Dr. Sri Ram, the Chief Scout Commissioner of the State from Srinagar, was another pleasant surprise. He wrote:

> *"My dear Pt. Shiv Nathji, I never knew before that you are such a great Boy and will leave all boys in the State far behind in the University exam. You are a hero indeed because you have achieved a unique position in the University....*
>
> *Yours sincerely,*
>
> *Sri Ram."*

3

After the post-examination break, summer vacation was the time for relaxed extra study and writing letters. I read more than a dozen books and wrote to two professors. From the Prince of Wales College Library, I borrowed *The Oxford Treasury of English Literature* and from the Ranbir Public Library, a volume of *The World's Best Books* which introduced me to books like *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexander Dumas, *Ivanhoe* by Sir Walter Scott, *Zadig* by Voltaire, *Les Miserables* by Victor Hugo, *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen and *Arabian Nights*. These libraries also loaned to me *Introduction to Mathematics* by A. N. Whitehead, *Public Speaking* by Dale Carnegie, *My Best Thriller*, *Hamlet* and *Our Cause – A Symposium on Indian Women*. Love of books and fondness for reading got me new friends – all my seniors – and interesting books from them – *From Yeravada Prison* by M. K. Gandhi from Shanti Sarup Puri (father of social activist and Kashmir affairs

expert Balraj Puri), *Letters from a Father to His Daughter* by Jawahar Lal Nehru from Rabindra Choudhary and *Nehru Flings a Challenge*, *Ariel* and *Three Men in a Boat (to say nothing of the dog)* from Shambhu Nath Bhakhri who had completed his studies in the College and was trying to get a commission in the Indian Army.

I wrote to Principal G. L. Gupta, who was vacationing at Subathu in the Simla Hills, posing the question "What is the use of Mathematics?" He wrote back:

> *"My dear Shiv Nath,*
> *I am very much pleased to receive your letter of 19th July which puts very straight and frank question about "The Use of Mathematics". I wish a very large number of students followed in your footsteps and put their difficulties before their teachers in an equally frank and unsophisticated manner. The answers that I am giving to your questions may be equally useful to a number of students, and I would therefore, like you to preserve it and make it available to others who may be interested in the subject! I feel quite a large number of students think like you and the question and the answer would very well form the subject matter of an article in The Tawi or the Weekly...."*

He listed the following four points:

1. Mathematics has been called "the mother of all Sciences" because it nourishes and sustains them. It has given life and vigour not only to Sciences

like Physics, Chemistry, Geology but also to an Arts subject like Economics, so far as it has to be dealt with in a scientific manner.

2. The modern age is "the age of Science" which means, in effect, that the approach to every subject, even of a purely cultural interest, should be scientific – free from all prejudices and as impersonal as possible.
3. All the phenomena which take place in the world have elements of variation in them which depend upon their variables. The temperature at a certain time on 24th June depends upon the locality – which means the altitude and latitude of the place, upon the condition of the weather, rainfall, winds, etc.
4. There is also a special field of co-relation between Sanskrit and Mathematics, if you wish to do any specialisation. There lies quite a mass of material in Sanskrit literature which relates to Mathematics and which lies unexplored for want of men who are equally proficient in both.

In reply to a subsequent letter, he informed me about famous Indian mathematicians of the past – Brahmagupta, Aryabhatta and Bhaskaracharya and also books where I could get more information about them – (i) *History of Mathematics* by Cazori (ii) *History of Sanskrit Literature* by Macdonald and Encyclopaedia Britannica. As advised by Principal Gupta, I wrote an article on the subject which was published in *The Tawi*.

I do not recollect what I wrote to Dr. Siddheshwar Varma, my Sanskrit teacher, but his reply was very encouraging, inspiring and instructive. He wrote:

"Anandashram, Kudh
19/7/43

My hope Shiva Nathji,

I am delighted to receive, 25 minutes ago, your lyrical pretty affectionate and beautifully frank letter of the 17th instant. Your style is remarkably up-to-date, being crisp, effective, short-sentenced and delightfully catching.

*But your outlook on life requires some improvement. You seem to be anxious for the object for which you are studying languages. You say you do not find any attraction for Philosophy or for Linguistics. Who told you to care for these subjects at present? If you had read more of Krishnamurti's works, he lays particular stress on "The Eternal **Now**". The **Now** is never fully appreciated by any human being, although it is the seed in which the whole future lies latently embedded. If we fully concentrate ourselves on this **Now**, if all the pores and nerves of our being vibrate with devotion to this **Now**, if the whole circulation of our blood is permeated with the awful importance of this **Now**, then we have not a moment's leisure even to dream of the Future. Nay, most of us stand guilty before this incompletely appreciated, often grossly neglected, nay, even criminally ruined, **Now**. So from day to day, from hour to hour, nay from moment to moment, you should see that you Use each second of your time in the best way that is expected of you. **Your Now** requires you, commands you, urges you, incites you to study thoroughly the subjects in hand, and it is this Now honestly followed, which will grant you the*

requisite reward and direct you to the next programme.

Yours sincerely,
Siddheshwar Varma"

I was thinking of making a serious study of Sanskrit, not only for the beauty and richness of its literature but also to comprehend better the writings of Indian mathematicians of the past. I wrote to Dr. Varma whether I should prepare for Prabhakar and Shastri, two proficiency examinations in the subject. He wrote back:

> *"Such examinations are useless. No self-respecting intellect should prepare for them. Could your brain, accustomed to my method of study stand this nonsense even for a minute? I am surprised how such an idea occurred to you at all. Whatsoever comes in the way of the highest expansion of the soul is wickedness. My first motto, displayed in my drawing room in Jammu, says – 'To live to our highest in all that pertains to us.'"*

He suggested a number of books including dictionaries and grammars for indepth study of Sanskrit. Since I could not afford to buy them he advised me to write to the Superintendent, Dharmarth Trust for a lumpsum grant for purchase of the books and endorsed a strongly worded recommendation. He wrote:

"Shivanath, the applicant, is one of the most brilliant and inspiring students that I have ever come across in my life. With a marvellously quick understanding, he combines a devotion for Sanskrit which has few parallels in academic history. And the marvel rises almost to a miracle when we

consider the fact that he is so poor that he has to fetch water personally from outside for the domestic use of his family. Such young men are real assets of the nation: the nation must encourage, zealously guard such treasures and should never allow them to be wasted for sheer want of facilities. I therefore strongly recommend that Dharmarth Department, if it has funds for such purposes, may give him a lumpsum for purchase of 13 books or procure them for him. No more deserving receptacle of charity could be imagined. Sarveshameva daanaanaam brahmadaanaam vishishyate."

When the college reopened after the summer vacation, I found my name in the "Roll of Honour" board hung at the entrance to the College Hall. I remember three names above my name, those of Qudrat Ullah Shahab who had qualified for admission to the I. C. S., Bharat Bhushan and N. N. Rampal who had joined the Kashmir Civil Service. Our group of top students had been depleted; Amarendra had joined Allahabad University for his B.Sc. and Jai Bhagwan and Tarlok Chand Gupta had gone to Benares Hindu University to do a course in engineering. Shyam Sunder Kapur had moved to Delhi. New friends floated in to join us – Vishwnath Datta from Amristar, Kailash Nath Mehta from Lahore, Kanshi Ram from Okara and Jagdish Talwar whose family had come from Burma.

Another season of parting came on us in October-November 1943. Shambhu Nath Bhakri who had come very close to me, was called up to Mhow for military training. Prof. Jai Lal Kaul was transferred and Dr. Siddeshwar Varma retired on 3rd November. He spoke very little in his farewell function. He began: "Life is making the best out of bad. To say that anything in this

world is dull, is intellectual sin, a crime. Linguistic paralysis has caught me and I am forced to take my seat." After the function, we accompanied him to his residence on Residency Road. On the way he said, "I am not a practical man. A practical man must be like Napoleon. My life has been an uneventful sunshine." He was indeed like sunshine, radiating warmth of affection and attention and illuminating his students' minds with his intellect and scholarship.

On 12 December, 1943, he wrote to me from Ludhiana:

"C/o the Postmaster, Ludhiana
12.12.43

My dear Shiv Nath ji,

Your charming and, as usual, outspoken letter of the 26th Nov. reached me here today. We intend to pass three months here; the winter of this place is parallel to the spring of Jammu.

I passed twenty days at Lahore; was the guest of my nephews: did not like to stay even for half an hour at Lahore, but "the tyranny of love" (pranayakopa) evinced by my hosts was irresistible for me, and I was forced to prolong my unwilling stay there.

At the D.A.V. college Lahore, I delivered a lecture on "The essence of an intellectual life" Shri Vishwa Bandhu Shastri presiding. I am of the firm opinion that nothing short of an intellectual revolution can save India from utter destruction, and I look to young men like you to rush to the rescue of the country. The fundamental

basis of the intellectual life is an objective outlook, of looking at things as they are, absolutely irrespective of our likes and dislikes; our passions and fears, our hopes and disappointments.

Expecting your further news,

Yours,

Sd/-

Siddeshwar Varma."

This was followed by a New Year post card:

"May the very dust of this earth become honied" – Rig-Veda.

My Hope,

I wish you a peaceful and sweet new year.

Ever yours,

Sd/-

Siddeshwar Varma

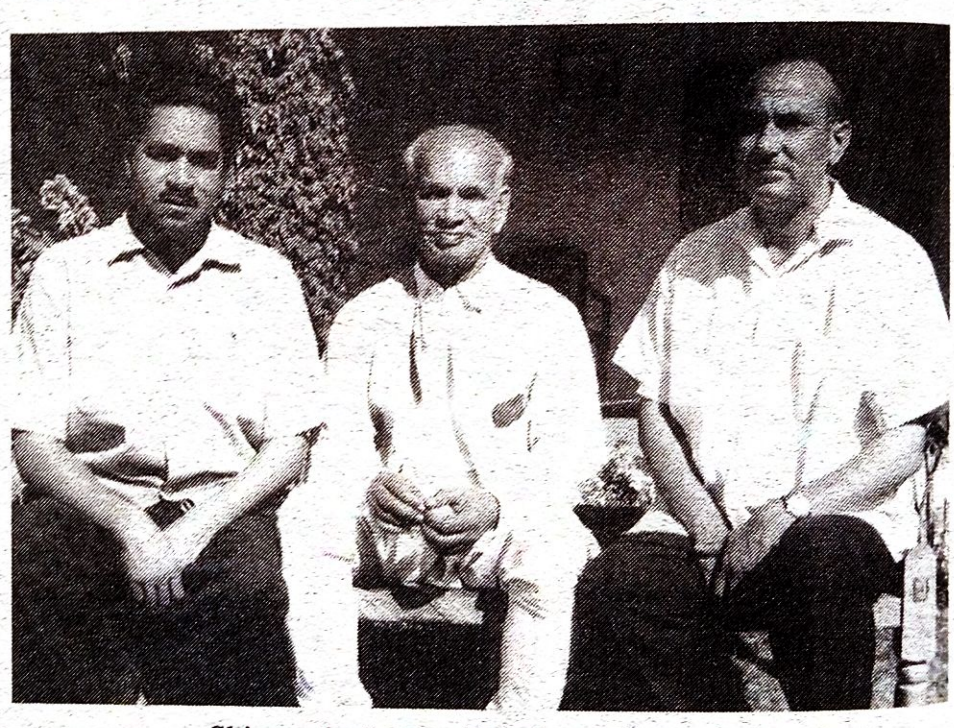
C/o The Postmaster Ludhiana,

1.1.44"

In the meantime, I had got an opportunity to visit Delhi as a member of the college students' delegation to the Indian Science Congress Session where I listened to the speeches of the Governor-General Lord Wavell, British scientist Hill and Indian scientists Shanti Sarup Bhatnagar, S. N. Bose, Meghnad Saha and others. I also took time after the sessions to take a tram ride from

Sabzi Mandi side to Chandni Chowk to taste parathas in the Parathewali Street and managed to see places of historical interest like the Red Fort, Jama Masjid, Qutub Minar, Humayun's Tomb, Central Secretariat, Legislative Council, India Gate and Birla Mandir.

On 15th January 1944, I produced the first issue of the Prince of Wales College Weekly after a break of seven months. The production had involved a lot of work – writing the editorial, a feature "About Ourselves" and a book review, collecting some material from others and editing it, going to Dewan Press to get the issue printed. The issue was greatly appreciated by teachers and students alike. I also found time to read some interesting books. During this period of preoccupation with the Prince of Wales College Weekly and other activities, I read Aldous Huxley's *The Brave New World* and two books of Indian language fiction in Hindi translation –



Shivanath, Sansar Chand, Narayana Datt

Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya's *Charitraheen* from Bengali and *Kraunch-vadha* from Marathi. K. A. Abbas's *Tomorrow is Ours, Men and Supermen of Hindustan* by

Joachim Alva and Kalidasa's Sanskrit play *Vikramorvashi,* in English translation done by Shri Aurobindo, were the other books I read during this period.

Ram Nath Shastri, who had joined the college as a lecturer in early 1944, played a pioneering role in organising Dogri Samstha, Jammu. He persuaded some persons who were writing in Hindi and Urdu to write in Dogri, their mother tongue. On the Basant Panchami day of 1944, a meeting of these writers was held at the residence of my friend Narayana Dutt Mishra where the organisation "Dogri Samstha" was formally founded. I attended this meeting along with the Jammu *Kalam* painter Sansar Chand Badu, journalist Dharam Chand Prashant, astrologer Bhagwat Prasad Sathe and poet Dinu Bhai Pant who recited a poem in Dogri.

The year 1943-44 was full of strife and turmoil all over the world – World War II raging in full swing both in the Western and Eastern theatres with signs of the Allied Forces gaining ground over the Axis troops, "Quit India" movement against the British rule in India gathering momentum with prominent leaders of the Indian National Congress in jail and Gandhiji in Aga Khan Palace confinement, the Indian Muslim League pressing their demand for Pakistan and Mohammed Ali Jinnah denouncing Gandhiji and the popular movement in the J&K State growing stronger and asking for popular participation in Government. "The All J&K Muslim Conference" had changed its name to "The National Conference" in 1939, widened its base with inclusion of Hindus and Sikhs and established close relationship with the Indian National Congress. In Jammu city alone, it had drawn to itself left-oriented intellectuals like Girdharilal Dogra, Trilochan Dutt, Balram Bhasin, Mohammed Shafi and

Saiyad Samanani, although Hindu Rajya Sabha had a much larger following. In July 1943, the Maharaja had appointed an Enquiry commission to recommend reforms in the State's constitution. In September 1943 there was great food shortage and the "Roti agitation" in Jammu showed a remarkable sense of Hindu-Muslim unity and claimed the lives of six Hindus and two Muslims in police firing.

The world of books seemed to provide a pleasant diversion from the oppressive, depressing news about happenings around the world and nearer home.

4

My fourth and final year in the Prince of Wales college, Jammu was full of responsibilities, engagements and lots of work – studying for the Degree Pass Course and Honours in English literature, four tuitions, including two free ones, increased frequency of meetings with college mates and newly joined young lecturers, participation in almost all activities of literary and cultural societies and editing of the College Weekly. In addition to these I decided to maintain a diary and purchased three notebooks with pleasing covers on which I wrote "Satyam Shivam Sundaram" and below these words, Shivanath, Fourth Year, Roll Number 1. On some days when I was not too exhausted, I recorded something before going to bed – some happening, some observation, some feeling, in an effort to correlate the outside with the inside with an alert mind.

May 20, 1944: There was election for the post of Secretary of the English Debating Society. I was elected

by a majority of votes – 15 against 7 and 3 respectively of the other two contestants. Did I feel happy? No. More responsibilities and distractions. And who knows whether it is good for me or not. It may generate jealousy and enmity in some. One should take one's success as no success. Shouldn't feel important if one wants to be carefree and happy.

Read a few pages of *The Importance of Living* by Lin Yutang – an enjoyable experience. The book expatiates on a philosophy of life as it is conceived, practised and lived in the East, specially China – "philosophy of a wise disenchantment and a hearty enjoyment of life". Throughout the book, the scamp or vagabond has been glorified. He is, according to the author, the most glorious type of human being. He writes, "Human dignity consists of the four characteristics of the scamp, namely, a playful curiosity, a capacity for dreams, a sense of humour to correct these dreams and a certain waywardness and incalculability. Moreover, it is the playful curiosity which gave rise to human civilisation." The author pleads for closeness to Nature and writes, "Man must harmonise with nature to enjoy a fuller life and appreciate flowers. Peony is the king of flowers. Orchid is the symbol of secluded charm because it is often found in a deserted shady villa; it has a subdued fragrance and graceful charm. Chrysanthemum gives the idea of 'cold fragrance' and 'cold splendour'. The lotus or water lily is the most beautiful of all flowers, its perfume pervading the air, and its white and red-tipped blossoms contrasting with its broad green leaves with water running on them like liquid pearls."

June14: The morning was cool, full of haze. Expected a windstorm which did not come. It was pleasant walking down to the college. Saw Pran ahead of me – walking in the centre of the road with a swagger of his shoulders as though he was the Lord of all he

surveyed. There is something haughty, vainglorious and ironical about him.

June 15: Called on Kitty in the evening. She was not well and had not attended College today. She was upset that some boys passed snide and indecent remarks about girls, "I feel like smashing their faces" she said and her eyes began to sparkle – live, liquid, penetrating eyes.

June 16: In today's meeting of the Hindi Sahitya Parishad, Dinu Bhai Pant recited two Hindi poems. On the way home, I saw Kitty walking back with another girl, ahead of me. Seeing me, they stopped and I joined them. We walked together for some distance. It was scorching hot but I did not feel it. Kitty complained of scandalous atmosphere of the College and her name being linked to that of Pran. She talks with such great passion!

June 24: Entered the classroom late. Prof. Rashid tried to be funny. He quipped rather quizzically, "Do you go to the temple every day that you are late in my class daily? Does your *sandhya* take most of the time?" This tall bachelor Professor of English with his scarecrow frame, parrot nose and Turkish cap on his bald head is not half as interesting as Prof. J. L. Kaul and one does not miss much in his class. And the boys talk in whispers about his relationship with short and smartly dressed lecturer Isahaaq. They are both seen coming to the college together.

I do not go to the temple but I do sit for *sandhya* or meditation for 10 to 15 minutes daily. My mind wanders pondering over unnecessary thoughts. But I feel myself in the presence of the Divine whose helping hand has always guided me all these days.

The entire afternoon was spent in the Dewan Press, expediting publication of the College weekly which carried my write up on freshers and was being keenly awaited.

June 26: Today we had rehearsal of Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*. Vishwnath acted the role of Portia admirably and Jagdish Talwar was every inch Shylock. I performed the role of Bassanio. After the rehearsal, I did not go home. Instead, I accompanied Vishwnath to his room in the hostel and he regaled me with some Urdu poetry – Iqbal and Faiz Ahmed Faiz. Vishwa is a remarkable person, reads a lot and is quite an expert in making an impression on others. He is pleased if some one praises him but does not show it. "What do you think of my speech in the Debating Society?" he asks. You tell him that it was "excellent" even though you would have rated it as "good" only.

"No, no. It was only ordinary," he retorts back. He is a lovable person all the same. If asked if he loves any particular girl, he says, "I like the hair of one, eyes of another, cheeks of a third and gait of still another ..."

From the hostel, the two of us went to the residence of Rameshwar, the young lecturer in Physics, where we had tea. From there we drifted to Jagdish Talwar's place where we were joined by Prof. Ahuja, Head of the Physics Department and the young Sanskrit lecturer Ram Nath Shastri and there was a lively discussion on college politics. Prof Ahuja did not have a good word for Muslim members of the College faculty.

June 30: It was quite pleasant during the morning walk on Ramnagar Road. I sat down on a promontory jutting towards the river Tawi for meditation. The sun had not risen yet. When I sensed a mild warmth and soft light on my eyelids, I opened my eyes – the effulgence of the rising sun from behind the low hills across the Tawi was something out of this world.

July 9: It was a day of outing – an excursion to the river Chenab at Akhnoor. Two buses – one carrying college boys and some young lecturers and the other, girl students.

We carried with us two baskets of mangoes and dipped them in the cold waters of the river. Kanshi Ram made arrangements for preparation of *parathas* and *halwa*. Bath in the cold water of the Chenab gave an edge to our appetite and we finished all the *parathas* and mangoes in a single sitting. *Halwa* or *Karaah* came next. After we had our share, we sent some across to the group of girls huddled together, away from us. They responded with *kalakand*, a kind of heavy milk-cake. Taking it to be stones, we threw it in the river. We regretted our hasty action when we learnt that it was *kalakand* and very tasty.

In the evening, we presented a show of the Court Scene of *The Merchant of Venice* before a packed audience in the College Hall. We trudged back after 11 p.m. On the advice of Prof. Manak Chand Khosla, I had to escort three girls of our *mohalla* to their respective homes.

July 12: The College has closed for summer vacation and I have been offered tuition of Pt. Prem Duttji's son Dev at Srinagar for the duration of the vacation.

July 13-14: Left Jammu for Srinagar with Pt. Prem Duttji, Shambhu Bhakri's younger sister Tripta and Dev in a car. It was a pleasant journey for the first twenty miles. Then I began to feel like throwing up. Actually vomited four or five times before reaching Kudh. We had to stop there for an hour. Leaving at 3 p.m., we arrived at Banihal by 6 p.m. The road ahead was blockaded and we had to break the journey at Banihal itself. There was a heavy downpour in the night. The sky cleared up in the morning and we resumed our journey at 8.15 a.m. reaching Maqbool Manzil, the residence of Pt. Prem Duttji on Srinagar Baramula road after eleven.

July 15: Today Prof. Prithvi Nath Pushp took me along to meet two remarkable men – Magna Baba who

sang *Jeevan ka kaun thikaana* and who talked of *Ananda*, bliss, and of individuality versus universality, and the other who called himself Maitreya, a disciple of Buddha. Magna Baba was a fountain of joy as it were, full of laughter, without any grievance or complaint who appeared to have attained perfect bliss. I wish I were a Magna Baba instead of being Roll No. One of the topmost class of the College, haunted by a host of distractions. The so-called Maitreya – in loin cloth, dishevelled hair, bareheaded, barefooted, with just one *loyi*, a woollen blanket – spoke perfect English, lay for the night wherever night fell, and was reported to have written a thesis on the age of the earth which he had torn off.

July 19: Prof. Pushp has been very kind and helpful. He introduced me to Anupam Dhar whose sister Kaushalya was married to my friend Amarendra Kaul's elder brother. Anupam is very open and warm-hearted. We walked together on the Jhelum river *bandh* and talked about the Indian political scene – Yusuf Meheraly and his acquiring wealth to build a large bungalow, M. R. Masani and his commitment to communism and visit to Russia, Mohammed Ali Jinnah and his rudeness and vanity. Some students had gone to Jinnah in a deputation pleading for a settlement with Gandhiji to break the Indian political deadlock.

"It is a matter between me and Gandhi, between Gandhi and Government, between the Government and me. Where do you come in?" he had asked gruffly.

"We represent the masses, sir. What about the masses?"

"I don't care for the masses."

Anupam told me that Kashmiri Muslims did not like Jinnah and his politics.

July 20: Today I went with Pt. Prem Duttji's son-in-law, Prof. Apurva Somnath and his friends to the Dal Lake. Everyone except me had a bath in this lake. I felt

ashamed that I did not know how to swim. Almost all the good *shikaras* in the Dal Lake appeared to have been monopolised by white people.

In the evening I accompanied Anupam to the Regal Cinema to see the release of the film *Flesh and Fantasy*. Charles Boyer's acting, particularly his kissing scenes, was exciting.

July 22: There were elaborate preparations in the city for the citizens' public reception to His Highness, the Maharaja. People had begun to throng the roads since noon. By 6 p.m. all the roads leading to Gol Bagh were clogged by crowds of people – people, people everywhere. The entire population of the city seemed to have gathered there to see His Highness. Little children from schools with red turbans or handkerchiefs tied on their heads were shouting, "Maharaj Bahadur ki Jai," rehearsing. His arrival was due at 7.30 p.m. but he arrived at 9.30 p.m. and the people waited. He had tea with the prominent citizens of Srinagar at Gol Bagh and then passed through the city slowly so that people could see him. He was in his military uniform and he saluted everyone on the way.

July 23: It was a day of excursion to the Mughal Gardens as part of a large group of thirty, including Prem Duttji's guests from Lahore, Gujranwala, Wazirabad – Dev and his mother, Ramesh and her Ghughu, Toshi and Usha, Yog and Madam Pasricha (Mathematics teacher in Fateh Chand Girls' College, Lahore), Rani and Munna, Didi and Sheila, Tripta and me, besides three domestic helps – all packed like sardines in two *shikaras*, pleasure boats. Charges eight and a half rupees per *shikara* for the whole day. We were rowed up slowly, leisurely, passing many houseboats, colourful *shikaras* and *donghas* blaring away from gramophones placed in them, film songs "*Pyaar kiya hota*" "*Barque-nazar giraaye jaa*". There was water, water everywhere reminding of

Coleridge's poem, "But not a drop to drink". The sun beat down on us, showering scorching heat. The drinking water that we had brought with us was soon finished and our throats were parched. A *shikara*, passing by our *shikaras* at some speed, attracted our attention – four boys with dirt-crusted faces in dirtier rags, playing cards and puffing at a *hooka*, hubble-bubble, by turn, singing some Kashmiri chorus together in a mood of hilarity and carefreeness.

"Aha! Lotuses!" jumped up Usha with her hands on my shoulders, scratching my back. Wide lotus leaves spread out on water with flowerless stalks standing out.

Chaar Chinaari,

Only a few stalks sported flowers – some fully blossomed, some half-open and some just buds. A lovely sight! Usha clamoured for one but the *shikarawala* was in no mood to take his *shikara* close enough.

Passing by Chaar Chinaari, a small island in the lake, we entered a narrow, stinking water channel, strewn with dead fish. Somehow we got over the stench and entered Shalimar garden. It was 5 p.m. A *durrie* was spread and we sat down to eat what had been brought from home. Strolled for a while in the garden and got back into the *shikaras* to head for Nishaat garden, where the fountains were dry. By 8 p.m. we were being rowed

back over the waters of the Dal Lake. A cool breeze had sprung up. The sun was sinking low on the western horizon, setting the waters ablaze.

Soon the sun went down and a new moon came up – a crescent moon, a little above the horizon. It also started moving down as it became dark. Lights in the Maharaja's palace on the bank of the Dal lake looked beautiful. Rani, Tripta and Toshi in the other *shikara* started singing. Our *shikaras* kept rolling leisurely over the waters, under the shadow of stars. At Dal Gate, there was pandemonium with *shikarawalas* quarrelling and pushing each other, trying to be the first to cross over. The other *shikara* carrying the ladies broke down and they had to be shifted to a houseboat. Our *shikara* was, however, intact and we reached Amirakadal where Doola Ram was waiting with his car. It was past eleven when we got to Maqbool Manzil.

July 31: I had been wanting to climb the Shankaracharya Hill. Yesterday I chanced to meet my class fellow Karuna Shankar in Amirakadal. We planned to meet at seven a.m. today and go together. We passed the Polo ground and came to "Recreation and Entertainment Centre for the Allied Troops". Karuna Shankar mocked derisively, "What a place for the pleasure of Tommies and Yanks! Wine and women! Here the foaming mouths of the soldiers rub against the powdered cheeks and reddened lips of women who offer their services for a few coppers! Pitiable painted dolls! And abhorable sex-hungry wretches!" There were two roads branching off from the junction – one leading to Gaggaribal and the other to Badami Bagh. A few steps on the road to Badami Bagh and we saw a beautiful bungalow to the right of the road, where Mr. Jinnah, called the "spoiled Archangel of Indian Politics" had been

put up as the Maharaja's guest during his recent visit. I had heard him at Jammu where he had started his speech in Hindustani, "*Musalman ab jage huai hain*" (Muslims are awake now). Then he had spoken in very fluent English, "We must have Pakistan, come what may". In Srinagar he was cold-shouldered by the National Conference. He was reported to have made purchases worth Rs. 28000/- before leaving Srinagar.

From there we started moving up the hill – pleasurable but perspiring climb through shortcuts, higher and higher. Up there, we rested for a while and climbed the steps to the temple of Shiva. I sat for meditation at the back of the temple. Cool fresh air! Blissful moment!

The Maharaja was expected to go round the city today. Gates had been erected at every *chauk*. Red flags with slogans were hung throughout the route – "Freedom is our watchword", "We want employment and work throughout the year". The roads were thronged with people. He came at about 6 p.m. He was in his military uniform, as he was on the last occasion. People showered flowers on him. He shook them off and responded to people's slogans with his military salute. After he had passed, a dust storm arose and dust ran into our eyes, making it difficult to proceed. It was pleasant at Gaggaribal with cool breeze coming from the ruffled, rippling waters of the Dal lake.

August 1-10: These ten days, away from Srinagar were among the most enjoyable and memorable days of my life. It was with great effort and the help of an Englishman whom I met at the bus station that I was able to get two seats for Pahalgam – one for myself and one for Karuna Shankar. Each ticket cost three rupees and twelve annas. There was shortage of petrol in the

State and buses were rationed. Special sanction of Mr. Bell, the British Inspector General of Police, had to be obtained to divert a bus meant for Jammu, to oblige another Britisher, which accommodated twenty one more passengers who had been turned down by the bus manager.

The bus started at about eleven. We lost more than half an hour at Khannabal where our bus and a *tonga* entered it simultaneously from opposite sides and neither side was prepared to push back a little to allow the other to pass. A hefty Punjabi gentleman got down from the bus, caught hold of the horse's reins and tried to push the *tonga* back. In this process, a wheel of the *tonga* got slightly damaged. The *tongawala* began to cry, shedding tears and wiping them with his dirty shirt. About two dozen Kashmiris collected and surrounded the gentleman, demanding compensation – price of the whole *tonga*. Some of them brought logs and blocked the bridge. There were hot words flying from both sides. Some local Kashmiris came with sticks, threatening to beat up our man, until a government official in *khaki* breeches and a sola hat passed by and stopped to pacify the crowd, our man agreeing to pay three rupees for the damage. This incident shows that Kashmiris have realised the significance of the adage "Unity is Strength" and are making full use of it.

The bus reached Pahalgam at about 2.30 p.m. We engaged a coolie for eight rupees and started our *yatra* on foot at 5.30. Feeling fresh, full of spirits, we ran. The path was plain. Natural scenery all around was enchanting. Pahalgam Nallah roared furiously through and over stones. We sat at one place to drink its cold water and ate a couple of rusks we had brought along. It was dark when we reached Chandanwadi – the first halt after Pahalgam, where the pilgrims led by *Chhadi*

Mubarak, the holy mace, had arrived during the day. The place was a temporary town of tents, bustling with activity. We had no tent and passed the night somehow, lying crouched in a corner in the cold night, in another man's tent.

Continuous singing of *bhajans* nearby, incessant crying of a child in the adjoining tent and the cold creeping through my scanty bedding made my sleep fitful. Getting up at about seven, on the morning of 2nd August, I found that the *Chhadi* and entourage had left at about 4 a.m. and very few people had remained behind. The whole place was littered with human shit. There were high mountains on all sides, covered with greenery, with some bald spots at their tops, wild birds twittered and fresh air mingled with the foul smell of excreta. It was a very, very steep climb from Chandanwadi. It was appropriately called Pissu Ghaati and it made us extremely exhausted and breathless. There was sufficient greenery up to the top of the Ghaati (10550 feet above sea level) but thereafter there was very little vegetation. We rested at the top and bought two *poories* each, paying two annas per *poorie*. The path ahead was smooth and one could see waterfalls high up, tumbling down like white snakes, melted snow whiter than milk. As we reached the Sheshnaag lake, after a steep descent of about one and a half furlongs, we saw some *sadhus* having their bath in the lake. The water was very cold. But when, at a little distance, I saw a girl preparing to have a bath, I took off my clothes and stepped in. The cold water was bearable and after the bath I felt refreshed with all the fatigue of the climb gone. About half a mile's steep ascent brought us to the rest houses of Vavajan. We were famished. *Poories* here were available for two and a half rupees a *seer*(900 grams); we took half a *seer* each. View of Sheshnaag from the

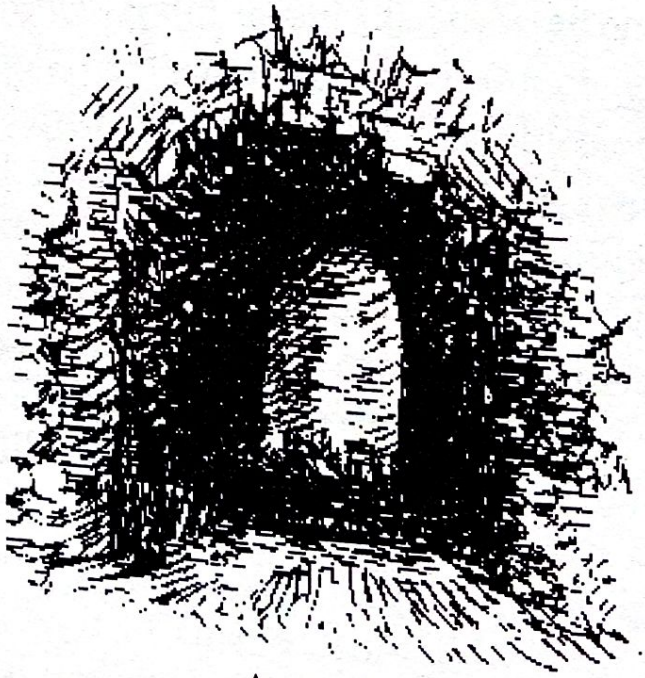
plateau of Vavajan was simply splendid – a reservoir of crystal clear bluish green water fed by waterfalls from the surrounding high mountains covered with snow on the eastern side, white sheets of snow dazzling in the sun. Their grandeur and sheer beauty were breathtaking! Sitting sandwiched between two ridges, facing the lake, with the canopy of a green blue sky flecked with remnants of dark clouds that had showered sparingly an hour back above, I watched with fascination one of the most amazing sights unfolding lower down.

Before turning in, I had a full look at the moon just risen above the tip of the snow-capped mountain, shedding its lustre over the vast landscape and the lake, enveloping the far off mountains in a hazy, whitish mystery. Faint roar of the nallah fell pleasantly on the ears. I wanted to stay outside the tent and bathe in the cool rays of the moon. Sleeping in a night like this was a crime against moonlight. Tents which were bustling with life only two hours ago, appeared all wrapped in the white shroud of moonlight. My weary limbs dragged me into the tent and I slept. It was perhaps the coldest night I had ever experienced – the night at Vavajan (11730 feet from sea level). I woke up with aching limbs. Here at Vavajan, I saw a stark naked *sadhu* for the first time, sitting around a *dhuni*, a log fire, along with two others like him. There was further ascent before us to the highest point on the way, (14000 feet) where there was some difficulty in breathing. From this point, we had to descend, to Panjatarani – the valley of five Gangas – a lovely spot. We rested for a while on the bank of the first stream and took some *poories*. It was 2 p.m. And it began to rain. I, along with an American *sadhu* who had been observing silence for four months, took shelter in the *Tehsildar's* rest house. A European lady, perhaps Dr.

Folk, who quoted *Upanishads*, was also there in the rest house. When the rain stopped, it became very cold. I ventured to have a dip in the Panjatarani stream – couldn't stay in the water even for a minute. But I felt refreshed after the cold bath. I saw some Dogra women bathing and then giving something to *pandas*, priests. A fat man poured water over his body from all the five streams, after which he was shivering like a leaf.

In the evening, Karuna Shankar and I walked over to Kanshi Ram's tent. I saw the *nanga sadhu* I had met earlier at Vavajan, seated before him, narrating his experiences in Nepal and Kailash Mansarovar. He had tied a metal ring round his penis and used it as his pocket. Kanshi Ram said he had a ten rupee note in it and he could lift a weight with it.

4th August was the *Rakshabandhan Purnima*. The way from Panjatarani to the Amarnath cave was steep again. We bathed in the Amar-Ganga from where we could see the Cave, linked to us by a row of men, women,



Amarnath

children – some going up, some returning. After we had covered a few steps, we saw some sparrows and a pigeon. The Cave was crowded. I somehow wormed my way to

get close to the Shiva *linga* of snow, covered with offerings. I stood in front of it for about ten minutes. I did not feel any stirring of emotion or devotion in my heart. Visitors appeared keen to get a drop from the roof above into the mouth. It was snow-water oozing in drops and anybody could get it in the mouth. I had a big *tilak* on my forehead and some powdered *prasad* in my hand when I came out of the Cave. My feet were numb with cold. I bought some white chalk-like earth for two *pice* and started running down towards Panjatarani. Back in Panjatarani, we rested throughout the day in the tent provided by the Dharmarth people. In the evening we went to the bank of Panjatarani to answer the call of nature. The peaks of western mountains were tinged with hazy silver. On the bank of the streams, lower down, a frightening red fire was ablaze where a *sadhu* was being cremated. He was reported to have attempted to go to the top of the Amaranth Cave and beyond. Some local shepherd had told him about a legend that there was a beautiful lake in the rear of the Cave in the middle of which a lotus bloomed on *Rakshabandhan* day, a calf emerged from the lake, circumambulated around the lotus and disappeared. Perhaps the *sadhu's* curiosity had led him to the top of the Cave. He had fallen from there and died in the morning. Lal Baba had his story – the *sadhu* was a *pranayami*, had fixed his trident on the top of the cave and raised his *Kundalini* to *Brahmarandhra*, top of his head through which his soul had transcended, leaving a hole there. Some others said he had chosen to leave his body at this holy spot on a holy day. The incident had spread a halo of eerie sadness. When we returned, the whole valley of Panjatarani was flooded with the light of the full moon – the little beautiful valley of tents surrounded on all sides by towering mountains. The streams were murmuring and producing music of their

own. Except for this divine melody, solitude reigned supreme.

On the morning of 5th August, when I opened my eyes, it was drizzling. It had rained in the night also. We left Panjatarani, the beautiful valley where we had spent two nights under the moonlit sky, with a heavy heart. Exhausting ascent to the 14000 feet point, and then descent to Vavajan in continuous drizzle. I slipped a couple of times but the staff in my hand saved me. By 4 p.m. we were at Chandanwadi. On the way we came across a sadhu, lying on the path, shivering, muttering indistinctly "water, water". We had no utensil with us. A bucket borrowed from two Gurkha women and some brandy from a Kashmiri passing that way, mixed with some water in the bucket, was helpful in reviving him. The path to Pahalgam was muddy, especially the bazaar. My pyjama and Peshawari chappal were besmeared with mud. Karuna Shankar and I parted company at Pahalgam. I met Prof. Rashid on the way and he guided me to my friend Jai Bhagwan's tent to the left of Telegraph Office. I spent the night in Jai Bhagwan's tent.

I found living in a tent at Pahalgam fascinating – open plateau, tall trees, cool breeze, fresh air, bright sunshine, brief spells of showers, roaring Liddar stream. It had rained in the night and when we went to the Liddar for a bath it began to drizzle. We placed our clothes under the bridge and had a hearty bath in the cold water. After lunch in the tent we rested for a couple of hours and then went to Sheikh Sahab (Prof. Rashid) who served us quite a heavy tea – omelette for Jai Bhagwan and sweets and fruits for the vegetarian me. In the evening we went for a walk on the road to Srinagar. Near the bridge over the Tulian *nallah* we entered the jungle road. Sheikh Sahab showed us his plot of land, commanding a good view all round. Coming back, I

slept through the night like a log, only to rise the next morning. On the 7th, I simply rested.

8th August was the day of our excursion to Tulian lake. Prof. Rashid had arranged everything, from Suna, the ponyman who would guide us, to all kinds of eatables – bread and butter, *rasagollas* and *kalakand*, some saltish things, boiled potatoes, apples and plums, tea prerequisites and plates and cups. But he did not agree to come with us. We left at about 9 a.m. It was a stiff hike through a thick forest of tall coniferous trees – deodars, birch and fir. After about a mile's hike, when we reached a small patch of plain ground, we were perspiring. We took off our coats and stuffed them in Suna's tiffin hamper, wetted our throats with some plums and resumed our hike until we got to the foot of the one and a half mile stony height beyond which no horse could go and where there was no vegetation except yellow, red and tiny blue flowers near the Tulian Lake. There were a few houses there and we saw some cattle. The Tulian *nallah* flowed through this region and the land around it was wet. Ascent up the *nallah* up to the lake was pretty steep and tiring – it was all stones and more stones – small and big. We had to go over these stones to get to the shore of the lake – a small reservoir of clear, bluish-green water. Behind the lake stood a high mountain, capped with snow. There were streaks of snow on the other peaks also.

We sat down, exhausted and famished. Jai Bhagwan would not let us eat anything until tea was prepared. Suna lighted the fire with some dried pieces of wood we had brought along and as soon as tea was ready, we began to eat everything together – sweets and fruit and bread. While we were taking tea, mist encircled and enveloped us from all around; nothing, not even the

sun and the nearest mountain peak were visible. Rain appeared imminent and small drops of it threatened to engulf us. We packed our things hurriedly and bade goodbye to this beautiful spot with its bald grandeur set in the midst of bald snow peaks. Trudging back over the tract of stones was tough and hard. After a steep descent through fir and birch trees, we came to a small plain. Crystal clear water of a small waterfall ran through this plain. There were tiny bushes around. When we came near the water-channel, we were approached by five small kids of the shepherds and an old woman who gathered around us with extended hands, begging, "*Peesa de do*" (give me a pice), "*Peesa de do*". Jai Bhagwan gave the kids a pice each but had no pice for the old woman who was disappointed. The sun was burning hot when we crossed the plain of Bai Saran. It was about 4 p.m. We rested here for a while and played a few card games. Then we ran down the winding path to Sheikh Sahab's tent on the Pahalgam plateau.

After another day's stay at Pahalgam, I returned to Srinagar on the 10th of August.

August 18: Today I went to Mujahid Manzil, the headquarters of the National Conference where Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya was scheduled to deliver a lecture organised by Youngmen's Association "All Kashmiri Youth Congress" – a staunch nationalist organisation working under the direction of Mr. Bamzai, a law practitioner interested in students' politics, with Motilal Misri as its secretary. My friends Anupam Dhar and Krishna Sood were its active members. We saw some poor Kashmiris, about fifty of them, on the grassy lawn – some sitting, some reclining, some lying. "Let us sit with the proletariat," suggested Anupam and we sat down on the lawn. Kamala Devi came, escorted by Miss

Lakhwara and Mr. Bamzai. We stood up and showered flowers on her. She stood in the compound for a few minutes and was photographed with the members of Youngmen's Association. Then we went in. Poorly dressed Kashmiris sat on the bare floor against the white wall while well-dressed youngmen sat on a *durrie*, cotton carpet. Kamala Devi sat on a chair on the platform. Mr. Bamzai opened the meeting and Mr. Motilal read out the welcome address. Anupam Dhar, dressed in khadi *achkan*, made a speech. He said he did not believe that the ongoing war was a people's war when 400 million Indians were not free. It was a very well prepared speech with a broad sweep covering Africa, Burma and the Atlantic Charter. Mohammed Yusuf of Baramula who also spoke, was rather rhetorical, emotional and sentimental. Kamala Devi sat silently, calm, with a grave, set face. Marks of age and her toil for the national cause were visible on her face. Requested by the Secretary, she stood up and made an impressive speech, praising the students of Kashmir and calling Kashmir "a jewel in the crown of India". She said, "I have travelled round the globe but nowhere have I seen such fruit gardens laden with such lush fruits and in such plenty. And yet the people of Kashmir who are suffering from a deficiency of vitamins and are weak and sick, do not get fruit ... Freedom is a very heavy price to pay for. We have paid very little. We have failed to have freedom because we have not paid it fully. Thousands of people died and are dying of starvation. Had they died for freedom, they would have saved so many from starvation." Everything she said had a ring of sincerity in it. She had a charm about her that kept her audience spellbound.

September 7: The students of Kashmir are very enthusiastic about the outcome of Gandhi-Jinnah meeting. The Viceroy has complicated matters by

proposing to involve the depressed classes and the princes of India. There was a large gathering near the Palladium Cinema, just before Pratap Bhawan. Seven or eight students, including Miss Lakhwara, were seated in a vehicle fitted with loudspeakers and decorated with the Indian National Congress and Indian Muslim League flags and framed photographs of Gandhiji and Mr. Jinnah. Speakers were Communists and Nationalists and they spoke very eloquently, fervently. In the rear of the vehicle were college girls clad in khadi. The speech of Motilal Misri, in English, appeared to be rather over-eloquent. There was a speech in Kashmiri also.

September 10: Maqbool Manzil is crowded with guests of all sorts and they were planning to hire a bus to go to the Mughal Gardens. We were quite a few of us: the Pasrichas – Krishna, Rani and Madan, Mrs. Bishan Das and Miss Bishan Das, Sardar Bhagat Singh and his family, Chuni Lal, Yog and Usha and of course Dev and me. In half an hour we were at Chashma Shahi, the royal spring. There were many cars and buses and tongas outside the entrance. We entered and climbed the stairs and had a fill of natural fountain water straight from the fountain. It whetted our hunger. There were men, women and children all around, laughing, chatting, drinking the fountain water and wiping their mouths. There were families and groups on grassy lawns, having their meals. We settled down under a shady tree and had *parathas*, *poories* and rice with *rajmah*, *dal*, potatoes and pickles.

After about an hour's halt, the bus drove us straight to Harvan. It was closed. We walked some distance to look at the water reservoir from the backside – a huge storehouse of crystal clear greenish water. On our way back we visited a Trout Farm – lovely fishes, particularly the rainbow fish, the bigger trout jumping up to the

surface to swallow heads of ordinary fish thrown to them and the smaller trout fed on silkworms. Shalimar Garden was our next stop. It looked extremely enchanting today. I lingered to look at the tastefully laid fountains and the small dark stone pavilion in the middle of running water. The image engraved itself on my memory. We had tea at the Nishaat Garden. When we left the garden, the fountains had stopped, the sun was hanging low on the western horizon colouring the sky red and lending an indescribable hue to the waters of the Dal Lake. The shadows of trees on the other side lengthened to touch the shore on the side of the garden. I sat there, watching the exquisite scene of nature for about 15 minutes. The sun went down and our bus ran along the bank of the lake.

September 15: It was Friday today and I made a trip to Jama Masjid – a huge building with innumerable massive wood-pillars. Inside, Yusuf Shah, the religious head of Kashmiris, was reading something and explaining it in Kashmiri to a large congregation of men and women seated around him and repeating *La Ilahi Mohammed Rasul-Allah*. Poverty and distress were writ large on their faces. Some wore rags, others were half-naked, some had no headgear and others no shoes. There were beggar maids begging for alms, some physically handicapped beggars spreading their hands for a pie or two. A pitiable spectacle! Outside the mosque, hawkers and pedlars fleeced the poor Kashmiris with toys, Japanese-make goods and second-hand things. After about half an hour's stay there, I proceeded to the Hari Parbat Fort. It was a long, exhausting ascent in the scorching sun. The temple there had been locked by the *pujari* who had gone home. I had a bird's eye view of the cliff of Nanga Parbat and Srinagar city spread at its feet – water, greenery, trees, tin roofs and wooden

roofs. While descending from the fort, I came across a massive *masjid* in ruins and a number of *ziaratgahs* with typical *mullahs* asking the visitors to place some coins and get sugar pills as the sage's blessings.

I had seen the opulence, grandeur and beauty of Nature in Kashmir and also the squalor, poverty and deprivation of common Kashmiris. I had tasted typical Kashmiri cuisine and learnt something of student politics and political consciousness of Kashmiris. I had also read three books – *One world* by Wendell Wilkie taken from Pt. Prem Duttji, *Mother Russia* by Maurice Hindus borrowed from Anupam's friend Bashir's father Dr. Nur Hussain and *Oh, You English* by D. F. Karaka lent by Anupam. Only three days were left to my departure from Maqbool Manzil, on 29th September. Whatever time I had, was utilised in farewell visits to the office of the All Kashmir Youth Congress – a small room without electric connection in which photographs of leaders of the Indian National Congress with their significant statements were neatly displayed, to the residence of Principal Jai Lal Kaul who took me along to his in-laws' three storeyed house to partake of a Kashmiri feast, tea in brass *kaulis,* bowls with *baaqarkhanis* and lunch of rice with highly spiced vegetable curries served in *thaalis,* brass plates; to Sri Pratap College Hostel to bid goodbye to Krishna Sood and to Anupam Dhar's for tea.

It was still dark when I woke up on the 29th morning. I looked out through the open window – there was no moon and starlight was fading. Another mist-shrouded light was heralding the dawn. After a hurried wash, I headed towards Hadow's Park across the road leading to Baramula. Reached the small grassy lawn where I used to go almost daily and do some exercise and meditation – a spot sacred to me. That day, on the

29th of September, I just stood there for fifteen minutes, mute and motionless and prayed silently, thanking the Divine for a comfortable, enjoyable, experience-filled sojourn. Back in Maqbool Manzil, I had my bath, ate some *khichri* with curds and left for the Bus Station. I saw tears in the eyes of Dev and his mother when they bade me goodbye. The bus started at about twelve noon.

From Qazikund, the ascent to Peer Panjal began. Within one mile of our ascent, we came across two road accidents – a military vehicle lying by the side of the road, its load lying scattered all over, the driver safe and two vehicles crashed into each other, their radiators damaged, but the passengers safe. It was going up and up and up to Banihal tunnel at 9000 ft. from sea level and then down, down down to Banihal with beautiful, grand and enchanting sights all the way. There was halt for the night at Banihal. In the evening, after meals, we went for a long walk. The moon shone bright in a clear sky, the landscape was flooded with moonlight and the *nallah* chattered musically. There was perfect calm, broken only by our voices and laughter. A heavenly night!

The next morning, 30th September, we boarded the bus again with our belongings. We had a view of the river Chenab at the Ramban bridge. At about one, we were at Kudh where we stopped for our midday meal – it cost me twelve annas, three quarters of a rupee. Passed Udhampur, Jhajjar, Kotli, Nagrota and reached Jammu. I was glad to be home with my mother and father. "Where is Ganga Ram?" I asked. "Gone, gone to a place no one returns from," said my mother. I was stunned. Tears gushed forth, blinding my eyes. I wept and wept. Ganga Ram, the pet parrot, had been very dear to me – a year or two older than me, we had grown up together. He used to accost me so sweetly, had extended his pretty little beak to be kissed and

lowered his head to be patted, so often! I would never see him again! It was a sad, tearful homecoming indeed.

Back in Jammu, the college reopened. A few days later, on 18th October 1944, Principal Girdhari Lal Gupta retired. I was asked to write out the farewell address on behalf of the "Reading Forum" and get it framed. It was quite a job, to be completed at short notice – getting black ink and proper paper to write it neatly, going to the city bazaar Pucca Danga to get it framed and presenting it in the evening. Principal Gupta had not only been a competent and conscientious teacher of mathematics, he had also contributed to the enrichment of the college by getting a new biology block completed and introducing biology classes, encouraging establishment of "The Science and Culture club", "The Hindi Sahitya Parishad" and "Bazme-e-Adab" besides the "Reading Forum". He had been particularly kind to me, partly because his son Tarlok Chand had been my friend since Class VI in school. Two young lecturers who had been taking active part in the literary activities of the College made brief speeches and two students sang songs of farewell. Principal Gupta said: "It is better to live in a fool's paradise and remain an idealist than to be a realist among the sordid realities of life." As he spoke, I felt a feeling of sadness stealing over me.

It was time to concentrate on textbooks of Mathematics A course – Sanskrit, English and Honours in English Literature. Despite that, I managed to read two extra books in October – *Fallen Bastions* by G. E. R. Gedye which recorded a hair-raising eye-witness account of the rape of Austria and Czechoslovakia by Hitler of Germany and *Gandhiji – His Life and Work*, a 500 page volume (price Rs. 25) with a beautiful khadi cloth jacket, published by Karnataka Publishing House,

Bombay with a number of illustrations and tributes of eminent people like Einstein and Pearl S. Buck and several others. I also kept going to the Ranbir Library in the city to read the daily papers. The 2nd October issue of the paper carried an article by one Ramabhai who likened Gandhiji to the founders of new religions and some ideal characters from Hindu mythology. He wrote:

> "He is the beloved commander of ours, the wonderful charmer of our souls, the unique architect of our edifice ... Is a human personality who has shaken the foundation of an empire as great as the British, who has stirred a country as big as India and who has challenged a civilization as grandiose as the modern Western, verily a soul rare amongst the rarest of the earth!
>
> With the simplicity of a Mohammed, the suavity of a Christ, and the serenity of a Buddha, he is the very consummation of more than two thousand years of the spiritual and social, political and intellectual life of four hundred million people.
>
> His inner life embraces the life of a Harish Chandra, an eternal vigil at the golden gates of truth, of a Shravana, an embodiment of supreme selfless service, of a Prahalad, a perfect unarmed resister. Besides these three masters who have nurtured him, there is a great fourth at whose divine and glorious residence he pays a regular call and makes himself, in the words of Romain Rolland, 'One

with the infinite being.' This is the Gita – the crown and cream of all religions. By his 50 years' strict adherence to the Gita, he has become Krishna – not the Murli Manohar Krishna but the Krishna who incessantly performs action, action and nothing but action, the charioteer Krishna who in the great battle of freedom guides the four hundred million of India and carries them onward on their path. To complete the picture, in the place of *Sudarshana Chakra* he carries his own *charkha* – the spinning wheel, which symbolises in itself India's urge and struggle for freedom, whose music acts as a balm to the soul, whose thread promises covering and food to the naked and hungry millions.

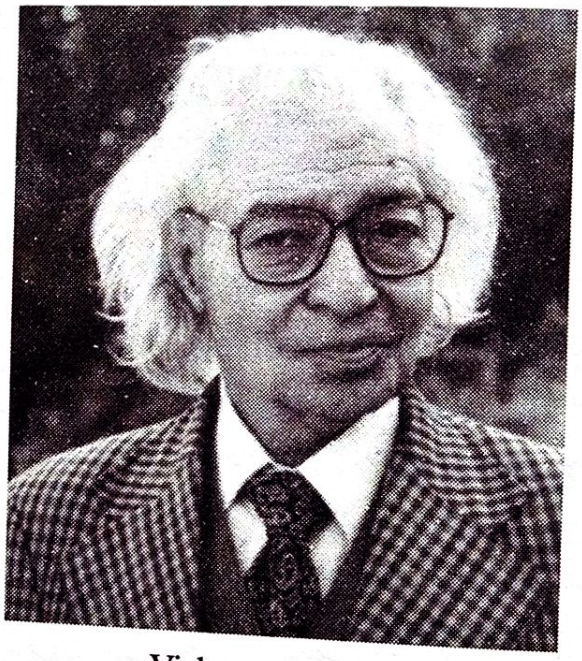
"His manifold activities have a range as vast as the horizon, a sympathy as deep as the ocean and an outlook as lofty as the sky....

"His work in the fields of khadi, the Harijans, village industries, village uplift, basic education, rashtra bhasha, nature cure and writings in Gujarati, Hindi and English is simply remarkable."

I was nineteen and had not visited the cave-shrine of Vaishno Devi, the presiding deity of Jammu. True to the Hindu belief that it is the Divine Mother who calls her devotees to her presence, the call came in a mysterious manner. On the 28th October, two of my class fellows, Narayana Dutt Misra and Sri Ram, came to my place and said that they were going on a moonlit

night pilgrimage to Vaishno Devi along with four others and would like me to join them. On the spur of the moment, I got ready, picked up a blanket and accompanied them. We were on the road when the Central Jail clock struck nine. Moonlight had spread a sheet of yellow-white on the land below. Near Ved Mandir, we were joined by Kanshi Ram, Kailash Mehta and two others. There were seven of us. As we walked on the winding road to Srinagar, and looked around, we found the beauty of Nature heightened by misty moonlight. Occasionally, we stopped and cast our eyes on the Tawi and listened to the ravishing music of the river. We could see patches of green, looking darkened, trees and almost bald low hills forming the background to the sandy bank of the river. At Nagrota, we saw one *halwai*, frying fresh *mathries*. We refuelled ourselves with *mathries* and water from the Tawi and proceeded further, singing, joking, laughing and talking nonsense. By one o'clock, we were feeling dead tired with sleep lying heavily on our eyelids. But we marched on. The moon was moving to the west. Shadows of the hills had begun to lengthen. Dark patches of ghostly shadows and bright moonlight. By 3.00 a.m. we were at Nandani. It was dead calm with a few residents along the roadside, asleep. Five of my friends huddled together on the veranda of a shop, while Kanshi Ram and I lay down on the wooden planks in front of another shop. After 5 a.m. I couldn't sleep due to the cold. I got up and tried to wake the others. But they refused to stir. We left Nandani at seven. At Dumel, we got some milk and *parathas*. On the way we came across a young woman who was throwing up and unable to proceed, with a baby on her hip and a bundle on her head. Kanshi Ram picked up her bundle and I took charge of the baby and we carried on for some distance. We reached Katra, the village at the base of Trikuta hill and spent the evening and night in a school,

courtesy a local teacher. On the 30th morning, we set off for the Devi's shrine at six. It was a pleasant hike with shouts of *Jai Mata Di* all the way and lovely views of Nature. Reaching the Devi's Bhavan, at about eleven, we entered the dark cave with the help of candlelight and had *darshan* of the Devi's icon. Our return journey was very exhilarating. Two young girls, sitting at Kamaangosha, sang for us a song in praise of Mata Vaishno Devi and smiled. We were happy and shouted "*Jai Mata Di*" in reply. At Katra, we took some *dhodhas*, thick bread made from corn flour, at a hotel and got into a bus that took us to Jammu.



Vishwnath Datta

During this time, I grew close to two of my class fellows, nicknamed Pope and Jo. I found Pope, alias Vishwnath Datta, warm-hearted, full of affection and concern, hospitable, well read and fond of books, with a genuine thirst for learning. Sometimes he took on airs wanting to show off and feeling important. At others, he behaved like a lovable child. Sometimes he dragged me to his room in the College hostel, plied me with something to eat and drink and recited poetry of Iqbal and Faiz. At other times he walked with me to the city, talking all the way. With Jo, alias Kitty, and her younger sister, I lost all sense of time and loved

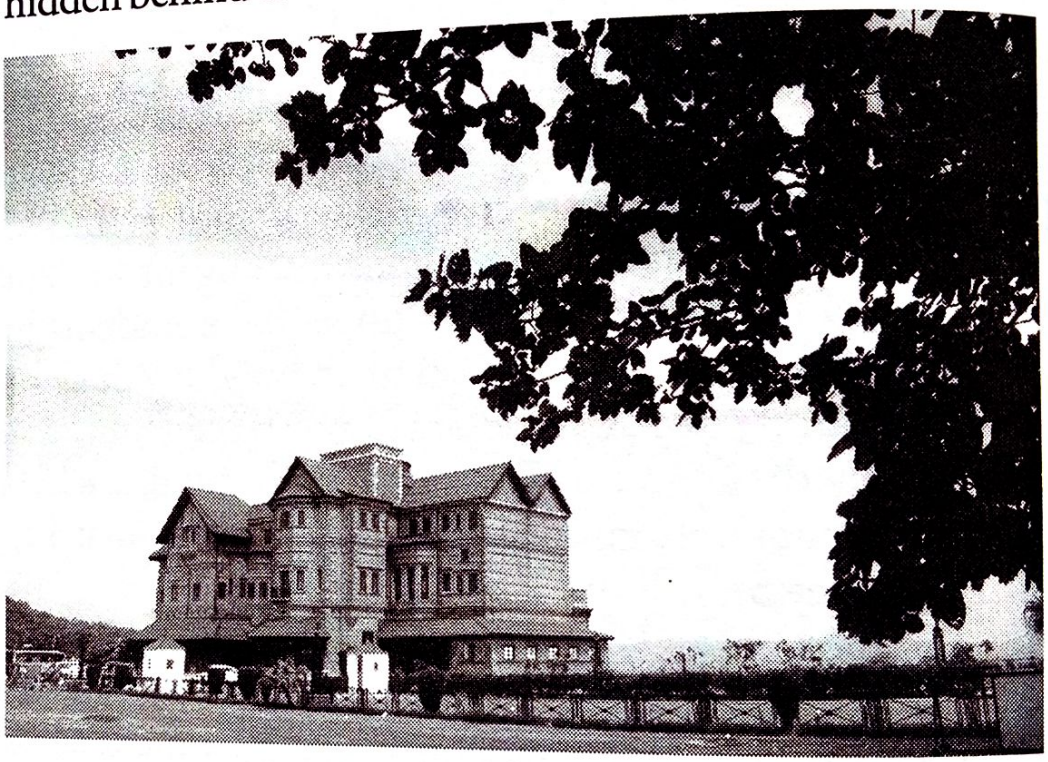
the sing-song rhythm of their talking. One evening, when I was helping her sister with algebra and geometry for the next morning's paper, Jo sat with us till 10 p.m., peeling an apple and a pomegranate; she seemed so close and dear. When she looked straight at me, her penetrating hazel eyes, now defiant and deprecating and imperious, now clinging and beseeching, a delicious mix of opposites, excited me and created a storm in my heart and I felt a strong attraction towards her.

November 18: This morning, as I walked in the light of fading stars, I looked back and into the future too. Where and what was I ten years ago? A small chubby kid of fourth primary, considered the most intelligent student of a class of ten harijan and two upper caste students in the Rehari Primary School. I came first in the Vth Class examination. A cash prize was announced but was usurped by the teacher. I had good friends and teachers in high school and in the tenth class got a scholarship of Rs.3/- per month for a year.

In the matriculation examination I secured a good position – fifth in the whole J&K State – with 636 marks. Thirty six rupees of scholarship and a few rupees saved from tuition work enabled me to pay Rs.38/- for admission to the college. In the Inter examination I did still better, getting the first position in the entire J&K State and 5th in the Punjab University with 531 marks out of 650 and a University scholarship. I could not have continued my studies in college without this scholarship. I think Destiny has been shaping my path. Where do I go from here? What after graduation? If I cannot do my masters, I may sit for the Kashmir Civil Services Examination. If I fail, I may get a school-teacher's job. Some inner voice whispers to me that I am meant for better things – perhaps Indian Civil Service. If Qudrat Ullah Shahab from Jammu, whose name figures in the

Roll of Honour above mine, could get in, I too can surely try for it. I don't think I can be content to smoulder in some petty hole. I must rise and show the world that a person can rise from the lowest to the highest.

December 3: It was quite cold in the morning and I had to run from the Amar Mahal Palace gate to a little beyond Panj-Peer to warm myself up. From the road, I went up a promontory jutting towards the Tawi, the spot hidden behind trees where I used to practise some physical



Amar Mahal Palace

exercises with Dr. Sri Ram, Jyotishi Ram Krishan and Gopal Dutt Mengi. Exhausted by the run, I lay down on the bare stony ground. My eyes closed of their own, sealed as it were by the cool breeze coming from the hills across the Tawi. Murmur of the flowing river made sweet music, the greenery around soothed the eyes and I dozed off. The noise made by the *Naroa* Party (group of old people) passing on the road below awoke me and I opened my eyes. The top of the hills, standing as sentinels in bald grandeur, were tinged red and the trees had assumed a fresher green than the earlier darkish green. I sat up and prayed silently to the soul of the world, Parmatma, "Give

me health, strength and wealth enough for the basic needs, inspire in me self-confidence and self-respect, make me realise the ideal of *satyam*, *shivam*, *sundaram* – true, good, beautiful – physically, morally and intellectually".

In the afternoon I went to Karuna Shankar's place to browse Babu Rao Patel's *Film India*. Quite interesting, stimulating questions and answers but too much praise of Susheela Rani and her role as Draupadi and deprecation of V. Shantaram.

January 8, 1945: It has been raining since morning making the whole place around slushy. I could not go out for my walk today. A new year has knocked out the old and 1944 has gone, irrevocably. During the past year, tuition work took too much of my time and I devoted very little time to my own studies. Now I must pay special attention to my studies, study according to a plan, a time table. Four to five hours a day should be enough. In the college I have conducted myself fairly well, maintained my self-respect and earned the respect of others. I have not made any New Year Resolution. If I have to make one, it should be to help persons in need of help, to make people happy, to smile and make others smile, endeavour to be a good listener and think only of the immediate present – preparation for the B. A. Honours examination.

April 21, 1945: Today was the last day of examination paperss. I have not done badly although I feel I could have done better. My association with the college has ended. There is a sense of relief from studies, sadness over the loss of a valuable, enriching relationship and a host of memories.

5

Free from total absorption in the final examination, was filled with concern for what was happening around the world. Going to the Public Library in the evening for scanning the newspapers and to Parade Ground for listening to the nine o' clock news from All India Radio became a part of my daily routine. Many homes in Jammu did not have private radio sets. There was a community set installed in the tiny public park at the south-western end of Parade Ground overlooking Shalimar Road and Ajaibghar and many people gathered there to listen to the news. The world seemed to be in a whirl, out of joint – World War II raging with full force in Europe and in Southeast Asia, India's freedom struggle gathering momentum and in Jammu and Kashmir, with "Naya Kashmir" a new democratic constitution ready, the cry "Quit Kashmir" getting shriller. There were divergent feelings among the people, some wanting the Axis Forces to defeat the British and free India from their yoke, while others

supporting the British. On 8th May, 1945, we heard that German forces had laid down arms and surrendered to the Allied Forces in Europe. Under the shadow of happenings in the world and nearer home, I was disturbed by nagging doubts about my own future. I wanted to go to Lahore for postgraduate studies but had no resources. I tried to drown my anxiety in work and reading – tuitions and books. I helped the sisters of two of my friends with their lessons in English and Sanskrit and took up two paid tuitions as well – those of Principal Manak Chand Khosla's daughter Lalita and Krishnabala. Both the girls were very intelligent and fond of extra reading and it was a delight to interact with them. Lalita Khosla loaned to me *So I became a Minister* written by Vijayalakshmi Pandit and Bala gave me a Hindi novel *Desh-drohi* by Yashpal and *Pushing to the Front* by Marden. Marden's book encouraged me to push ahead on my own steam. I read about a dozen more books during this period – *The Materialist Conception of History* by Plekhnakov and *And Quiet Flows the Don* by Sholokhov borrowed from Professor Ishwar Sharma and Girdharilal Dogra (who later became a Minister in Sheikh Abdulla's government in Jammu & Kashmir and a Member of Parliament in Delhi respectively and was the father-in-law of BJP leader Arun Jaitley), *The Ten-Point Way of Health* by Raja of Aundh taken from Prof. Rameshwar Das, Hitler's autobiography *Mein Kampf* and *1920s in America* lent to me by a friend Khemlal, Rabindranath Tagore's *My Boyhood Days*, *Chitra* and *Gardener* taken from another friend Shambhu Nath Bhakhri and from the libraries, *Mother* by Maxim Gorky in English and Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya's *Devdas* and V. S. Khandekar's *Krauncha-vadh* in Hindi translation from Bengali and

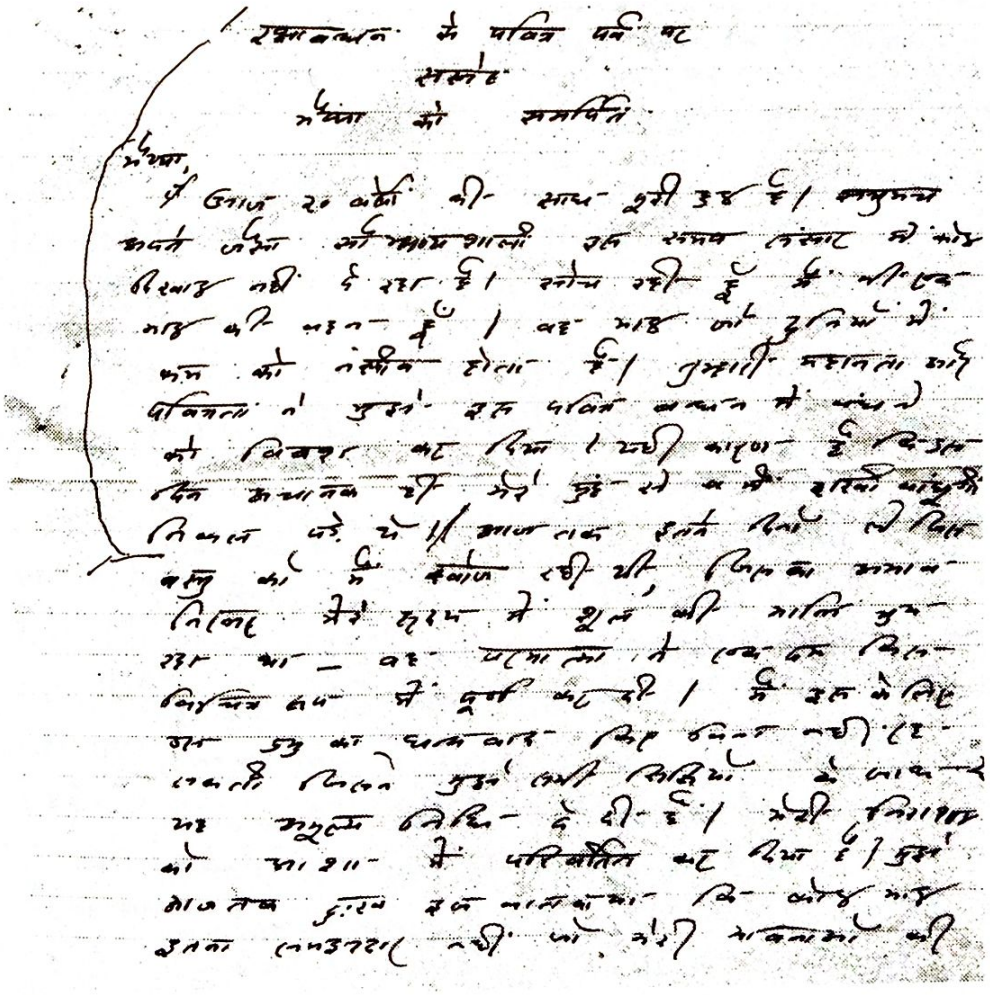
Marathi respectively. The characters of Suloch and Divakar in the last mentioned book impressed me greatly and I wished I could devote my life to social service instead of preparing and hunting for a job. On some days I found time to write something in my diary.

July 16, 1945: It rained in torrents in the morning. The lane in front of our house was transformed into a *nallah*. I could not go out and sat in, enjoying Nature's symphony of sound and sight – rumblings above in the sky overcast with clouds, pattering of rain and the noise of rushing rain water below, swallows and sparrows flitting and chirping hilariously in the *thohar* hedge and on the *neem* tree washed green and the branches of the *loquat* tree with their mud spattered dry leaves and green sprouts dancing in the breeze. Then I got engrossed in Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya's novel *Shesh Prashna* (a book received as a prize for getting the highest marks in a subject in the house examination.) I liked the character of Kamala with her high flown views and brutal attacks on the established citadel of tradition. At sunset, the clouds began to clear up and the sky presented a colourful panorama of clouds. A rainbow appeared on the eastern horizon and white and black flakes of clouds floated in the blue sky. The roar of the Tawi in flood could be heard, broken by the Central Jail Clock striking the hour.

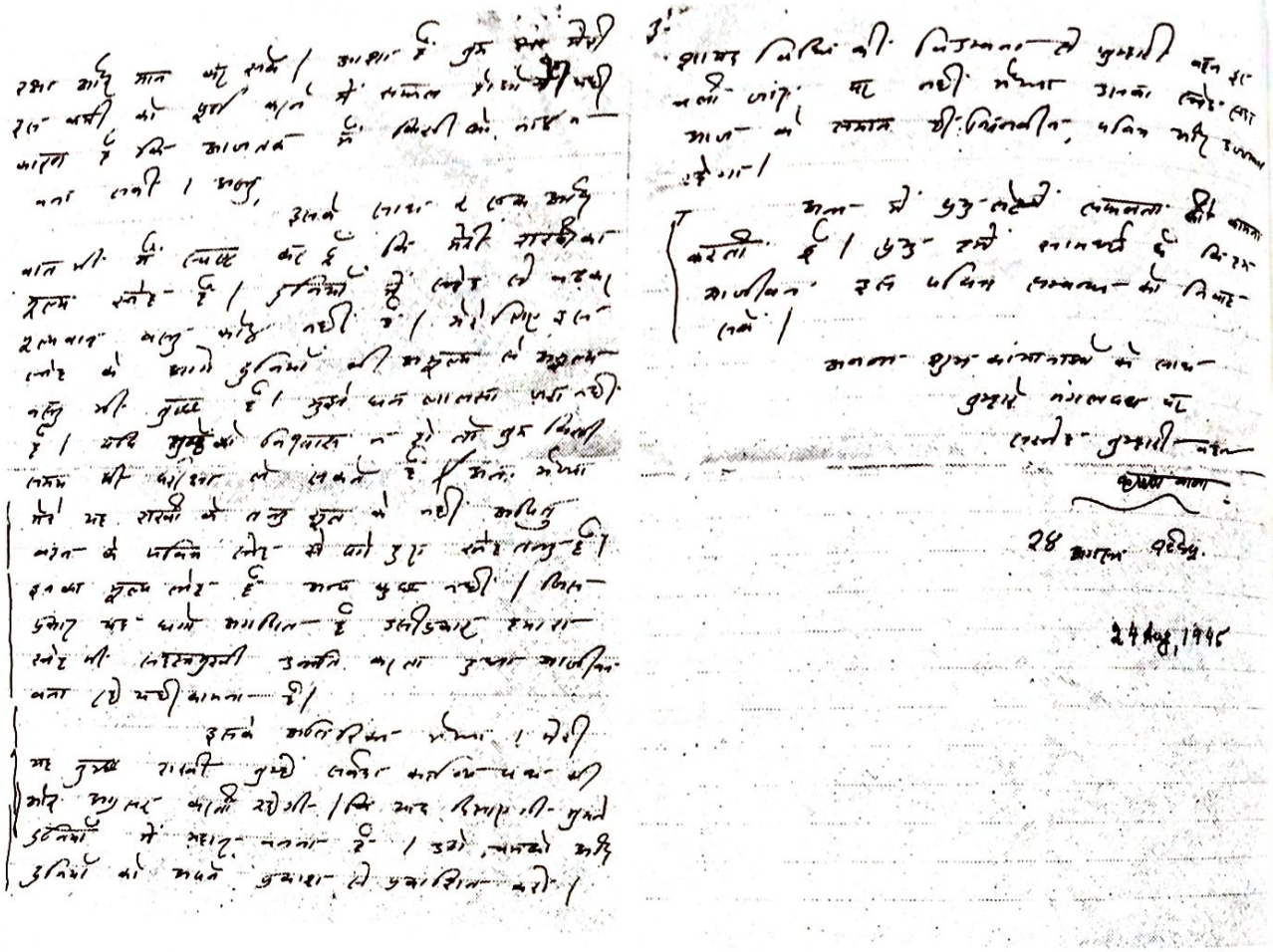
Results of B.A. and Honours examinations were out – I had got First Division marks and also the highest position among candidates from the State. This meant entry of my name in the other Roll of Honour also – list of those who had got the highest marks in B.A. Later I learnt that I had got the highest marks in English and Sanskrit combined while Dr. Raghuvira's

son, Lokesh Chandra, from Lahore, had got the highest marks in Sanskrit only. This entitled me to two gold medals and Lokesh to one to be presented by the Punjab Governor Glancy at the Convocation of the Punjab University at Lahore.

August 1945 was a horrible month in which the United States of America, a member of the Allied Forces, dropped atom bombs on Hiroshima on the 6th August and on Nagasaki on the 9th August, causing mass destruction of life and property, sending shock waves throughout the world and ending the World War II in favour of the Allied Forces. At home it was the month of *Rakshabandhan* when *gurukul*-trained, austere, *khadi*-clad Krishnabala gave me the affection of a sister. She spun *khadi* threads, made *raakhi* with them and came to my place to tie it on my wrist. She



was a very simple, affectionate and compassionate girl. I called her "lovable little chattering sparrow" and she called me "Bhayya". After tying the *raakhi*, she



left a letter in Hindi for me which ran like this:

> *"(I feel blessed and lucky that today I have got a brother who is so rare. Your greatness and purity compelled me to establish this sacred relationship and utter spontaneity that day. "I shall tie* raakhi *". God has given me what I was looking for, the absence of which was rankling like a thorn in my heart ... the threads of this* raakhi *are not just threads of spun cotton, but strands soaked with affection. They have no other value. Our mutual affection should grow a thousand times and live throughout life.*

This raakhi *of mine will always make you push forward on the path of duty and will remind you that you have to achieve greatness in life. Rise, shine and enlighten the world with your light.*

In the end, I pray to God to give you success. May God give you the capability of carrying this sacred relationship all through life.

With limitless good wishes,

With you on your path of success,

With affection,

Your Sister,

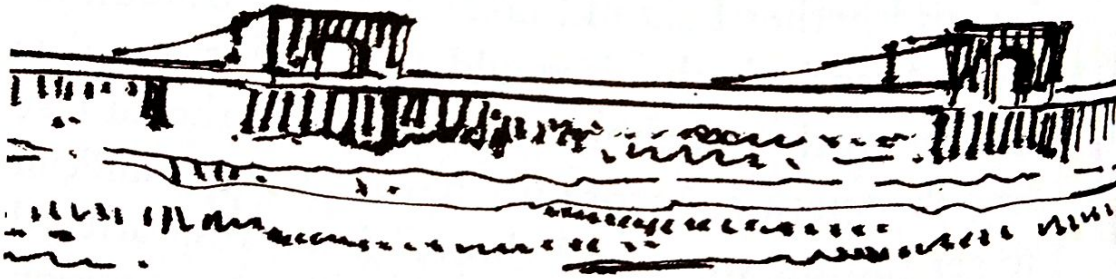
Krishnabala)"

I consulted Prof. Gauri Shankarji, Professor of Sanskrit in Govt. College Lahore, vacationing at Jammu whether I should take English or Sanskrit for my M.A. and whether it would be possible to get some tuitions work at Lahore. He said, "You should take English literature. As for tuition work, it is very difficult to get tuition work at Lahore." I was disheartened because I could not sustain myself without tuition work. But principal Manak Chand Khosla encouraged me. He said, "Principal Dayanath Bhalla of Dayal Singh College, Lahore, will stop here on his way to Srinagar and I'll introduce you to him and request him to help you get some tuitions."

September 17: Today I came across an interesting news in the pages of *Airgraph* – news about the marriage

between Dr. Tendulkar and Miss Indumati at Kasturba Cottage in Wardha. No marriage procession, no band, no show, no religious rites or *mantras* in Sanskrit. A Harijan acted as the priest and Mahatma Gandhi read out the Hindustani translation of Ten Commandments. Elsewhere I came across Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru's comment on India which appealed to me. It said, "Even the life of an individual draws sustenance from a hundred sources, much more complicated is the life of a nation or a civilization. There are myriad ideas that float about like flotsam and jetsam on the surface of India and many of them are mutually antagonistic. In an old and big country like India so much of the dead clings on to the living."

September 18: This morning as I was returning from my walk, I espied "Miss Left Right" on the road. My mind rolled back to the days when I joined college. Green from school, in my Gandhi cap and *kurta pyjama*,

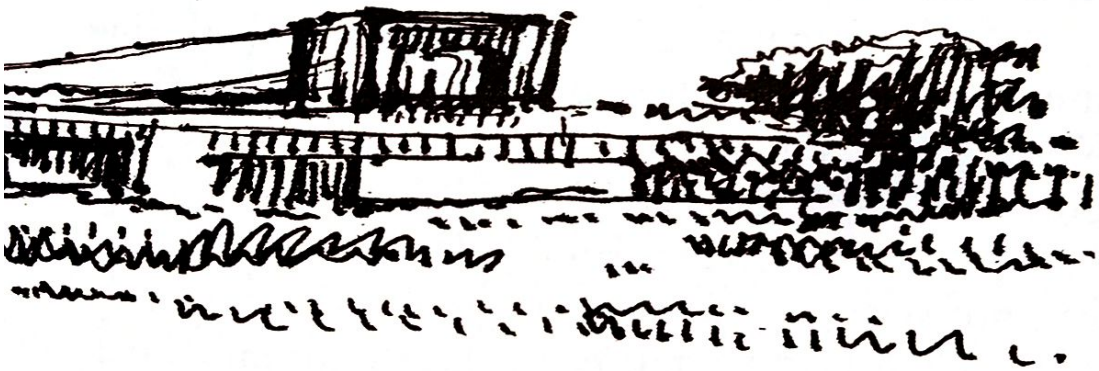


I was too shy, never looked up at the faces of females, never cast a glance at our class fellows of the fair sex. Now I realize that thus I remained blind to so much charm and beauty and it kept me barred from the joy of experiencing a thrill, a warmth of feeling, a throb in the heart.

But after the vacation, in the company of Amarendra who looked boldly at girls, I would

sometimes steal a glance at them. I liked particularly to catch a glimpse of this rosy-cheeked class fellow whose eyes resembled the eyes of Bhagawan Rama in a picture in our house. She appeared angelic to me. I felt my heart flow towards her in pure love. I believe that one could love a girl without marriage. When I saw her today, this morning, she flashed in my sight with a shower of joy. I know she has been a source of inspiration to me. Sitting in the examination hall, when I got stuck at some question, I would look towards her and my pen would begin to flow again.

On the morning of 19th September, I called at Principal Khosla's residence and was introduced to Principal D. N. Bhalla. Then I collected a letter of introduction to Pt. Kedarnathji, the manager of Kashmir State Property, Lahore, from Shyamlal Sharma and went over to



Old Tawi Bridge

Krishnabala who gave me a sum of Rs. 40/- from her personal savings.

In the evening, I walked down with a holdall to the Railway station. It was very pleasant – bracing breeze blowing, the sky flecked with tiny bits of clouds, playing hide and seek, as it were, with the moon. The whole atmosphere was steeped in soft soothing moonlight. The

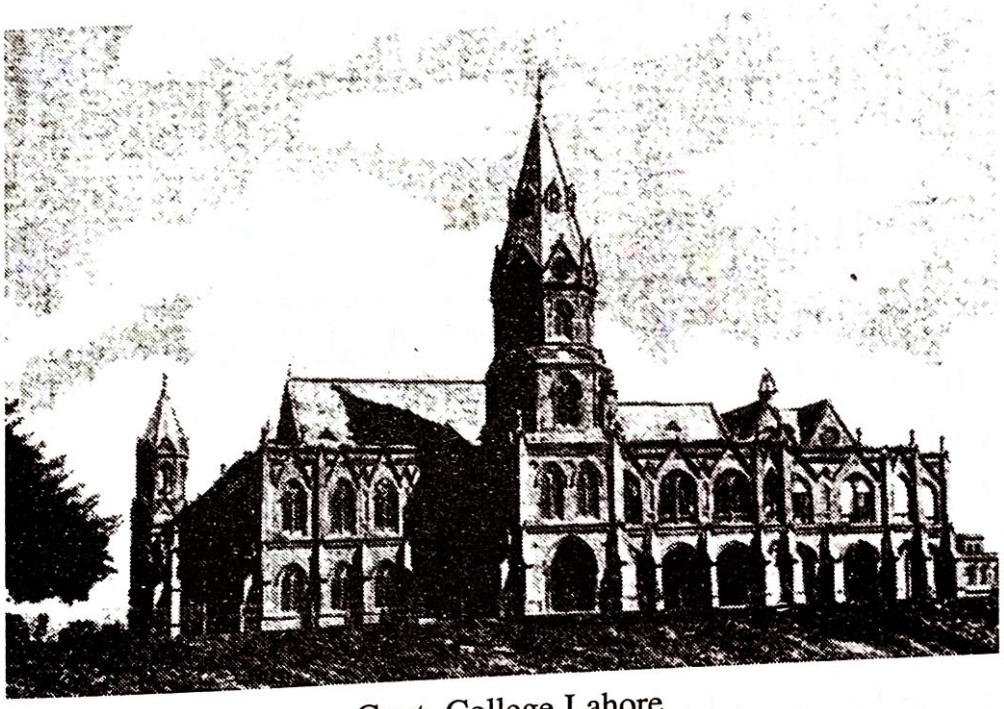
city lights from the bridge over the Tawi looked lustreless, purplish pale, beneath the moonlit heavens. In the train, I turned my attention to my co-travellers in the 3rd class compartment. The opposite seat was occupied by a young railway employee who began to relate interesting stories about Bawa Goria, snake-gods and *dwalas* who exorcised ghosts. But the most interesting figure in the compartment was Tika Ram, a domestic servant from Bhopal who had a thick cleft upper lip and whenever someone cracked a joke, he responded with a simple smile. He was sitting against the closed door of the compartment, not allowing anyone to enter or anybody to touch his things, perhaps his master's; there was a Pathan with long black hair who played on a flute and roused us from overpowering sleep, from time to time. A man who said he was ill, laid himself down at my feet and I felt quite miserable when another man sat down against my leg. At Wazirabad stop, I came out on the platform and feasted my eyes on the full moon and the grandeur of the skies and the charm of some lovely faces in the Interclass compartment.

As the train neared Lahore, the question bothering me was – where should I go? Hira Mandi or Krishnanagar, Hindu Hostel or Moolraj's serai? As I got down I saw Jialal Nanda, who had come to receive his mother, standing on the platform. His mother, however, had not come by that train. He took me along to his residence in Garhi Sahu. From there I got into a bus and went to Kailash Mehta's house in Krishnanagar.

On 21st September, I tendered my form for admission at the Govt. College, Lahore. Kailash's brother Raghunath briefed me about private hostels for students – the Hindu Hostel, the Amar Jain hostel. In the evening I came across Inder Singh, whom I had known from Jammu and he took me along to see a movie, *Vikramaditya*.

On the 22nd, Inder Singh introduced me to Prof. Inder Nath Madan, a Hindi writer who had written books like *Kavya-dhara*, a book on Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya and was working on a book on Premchand. Then I went to see Principal D. N. Bhalla who asked me to stay till the 25th when he would talk to Mr. Barry, the Principal of Atcheson college. In the evening I saw *Gaslight* with Charles Boyer as the hero.

On the 23rd I left for Okara to spend two days with my old class fellow Kanshi Ram. Back in Lahore, on the 25th, I went to see Principal Bhalla in Dayal Singh College, who talked to Mr. Barry on telephone and was told that



Govt. College Lahore

I should see him after I come back for admission. On the 26th I left Lahore by the Sindh Express.

On the morning of the 1st October, I was back in Lahore, in the Kashmir State Property in Hira Mandi. The Manager, Pt. Kedarnathji, was very kind; he received me and agreed to let me in. I got ready and was in time at the Govt. College to appear for the interview for admission. I was happy to be selected. On 3rd October,

I went to Atcheson College to see Mr. Barry, the Principal. He greeted me very enthusiastically, "Hello, Mr. Shivnath" and caught my hand. "Who taught you to shake hands?" he asked. I did not know what to say. He repeated the question and I mumbled, "Sir, it's just natural with me." "I like it, I like it," he said. I told him of my qualifications and difficulties. He was very sympathetic. A finger pressed to the corner of his mouth, he said, "I like you, I admire you, but Baldev Singh is a businessman, rich, but he will select the tutor himself and he wants a science man." I knew that in that case there was no prospect for me.

On the 10th I called on Prof Triloki Nathji Dharmat in the D.A.V. College and he got me one tuition – coaching Kumar for an hour daily in English and Economics. On the 12th morning I coached him, attended the first period in the College, got back to Hira Mandi, picked up my bag and caught the Sindh Express. From Wazirabad, master Daulat Ram joined me. Fourteen years back, he had admitted me to the primary school at Rehari. On that occasion, my father had distributed *batashas* to the students and given a *thaal*-ful to masterji. I had joined school late because of my mother's illness and masterji had given me double promotion to compensate for one year's loss. During that one year, a Muslim neighbour Abbas used to coach me at home and he beat me for even minor mistakes in spelling and pronunciation and Mother, lying in bed, with tears in her eyes, kept mum. The train rolled into Jammu Railway Station at 6.20 p.m. I was beside myself. My heart leapt up to behold Jammu and an inexplicable emotion made me nervous when I stepped out of the compartment. I gazed at the hills stretching towards the east and northeast of the Tawi, murmuring lazily under the lovely little bridge. The sun, a red ball of fire, was

lingering on the western horizon. It was pleasant and I decided to walk, even though in the morning, at Lahore, I had walked five to six miles in the course of tuition work and attendance at the college.

Near the lane leading to our house, I saw father in shirt and tucked up dhoti and turban, carrying two buckets of water from the public tap. The moment he saw me, a smile lighted up his face. He looked weak. I took the buckets from him. At home, my mother was sitting in the kitchen. Seeing me, she ran up to me and hugged me. She was heating milk and gave me a glassful after about five minutes. She had been fasting during *Navaratras* and that day was the 6th day of fasting. In the evening, after prayers lasting an hour or so, she normally took two small chapattis of *daryo* flour and one or two potatoes, a bowl of curd and a cup of *bajar-bhanga kheer* occasionally. Today this special *kheer* had been prepared and she passed on the whole of it and also her cup of curd to me. This visit was a surprise to them; they were expecting me on the eve of Diwali only.

During the four days that I was there, it felt like old times – walks to Ramnagar Reserve in the morning, evening strolls to Raghunath bazaar, meeting old friends. I also whitewashed my house. One evening I saw a show of *Ramlila* – it was *Bharat Milap* that day, in the Dewan Mandir Mandua.

Back again in Lahore on the 18th, I resumed attending classes in the College and the tuition of Kumar. I also wrote an application for composition tutorship and went to Prof. Gauri Shankarji to get his recommendation. On the 20th I was interviewed by Prof. Siraj ud-Din for composition tutorship, i.e. taking composition class of First Year students. I did well in the interview and got half fee concession. In the evening I went to Ewing Hall,

had tea with Anupam and Bashir and then along with them saw *Mrs. Parkington* with Greer Garson and Walter Pigeon in lead roles.

Lahore was the biggest educational centre in North India. It was the headquarters of the Punjab University to which all educational institutions in undivided Punjab, the Frontier Province and Jammu and Kashmir State were affiliated from the Matriculation onwards for examination purposes. And it had numerous colleges – The Government College, Forman Christian College, Atcheson College, Dayal Singh College, Sanatan Dharam College, DAV College, Islamia College, Oriental College, Law College, Medical College, Kinniard College, Fateh Chand Girls' College, Mahila College and so on. For postgraduate studies in English literature, Government College and Forman Christian College were supposed to be the best. They had some sort of an elitist character and admission to them was selective – on academic merit or social status. There were numerous hostels – in addition to the college hostels, there were private hostels where students could stay. While studying at Govt. College. I stayed at three different places, each with a different character, social climate and milieu.

I was in the J&K State Property Hira Mandi from 1st October to 17th December 1945. Hira Mandi in old Lahore was the best known red light area of North India with sex shops of all classes and entertainment halls of Mujra singing and dancing girls. Most of my time was spent in attending classes at the College, occasional visits to the University Library for borrowing and returning books and to Ewing Hall, the city hostel of Forman Christian College, to meet some friends from Jammu, cooking meals morning and evening, doing one tuition on Ravi Road and hunting for more tuition work by

visits to Atcheson, Dayal Singh and DAV Colleges – all on foot. But I also had some pleasant relaxation time during daily morning and occasional evening walks to the *Qila*, the Fort, where I spent some time in the *baradari* of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The *baradari* was reported to have been built by Moghul emperor Shah Jehan on the bank of the Ravi and later shifted to its present location by Maharaja Ranjit Singh – a beautiful well-laid place on one side of which stood the massive and majestic Fort on whose rear rose four towers of red sandstone, marking the boundaries of the Masjid, the mosque. Sight of the rising sun would be invigorating. On some days I went to Minto Park to watch *Kabaddi* matches in front of the Muslim Health Club. On some days, Tilak, an idealist, intelligent, well-read youth, a disciple of Sufi Lachhman Das, dropped in for a chat and I enjoyed talking and listening to him. I also enjoyed seeing some English movies like *Henry V* and *Random Harvest* in Re. ½ class in Plaza Cinema.

Sohan Lal Chhibber, who was married to the sister of a friend in our mohalla in Jammu, dropped in when he happened to visit Lahore for *aish*, pleasure. He wanted to show me some glimpses of Lahore life. One day he took me to the Ravi River for boating; after a boat-ride, we made houses of sand on the bank – beautiful small houses with boundary walls and roads. It was quite enjoyable. On another day, he took me to Tibbi Bazaar – third grade sex market where a man could play the funny game with a sex worker for Rs.2; there were funny shoppers and funnier wares with the pervasive stink of sex. One face stands out in memory – brownish dark with sharp features and liquid eyes, smoking a *nargela*, a portable *hukka*. She offered it to Sohan Lal, "*Babu, piyogay?*" (will you have a smoke?) and exercised her eyes. I felt disgusted at the sight of those wretched creatures

and hungry looking prurient men striking bargains, poking filthy fun and passing on. On another occasion he took me to a *mujra* show where Shammo was singing with some of her young understudy pupils sitting on the *durrie* in front of her. Some onlookers got up with currency notes of Re.1/-, Rs. 2/- and Rs.5/-, passed them round her head and gave them to the man playing the harmonium. Garlands of flowers with some five rupee notes strung in between were thrown round her neck, some men from the balcony showered notes on her. A youth, about my age, gave her twenty five rupees. I was not at all impressed by her singing. I felt that a cinema show with Kanan Devi or Mumtaz Shanti singing would be more enjoyable.

December 17, 1945: I have been back at home with my parents in Jammu for the last five days. It is so peaceful. Pacing in the compound after the evening meal, I looked up – a full moon floated in a rainbow boat on the pale blue sky. The moon was pouring milk in our compound. Then the moon was enveloped by flakes of white clouds, tiny bits tinged red and soon it was clear again. It was a rare, beautiful sight. Suddenly I was overcome by a mood of melancholy and questions of life, death and transitoriness of beauty assailed the sky of my mind. At the back of my mind was also the question – where will I stay when I go back to Lahore in January? Pt. Kidarnathji had applied for a transfer back to Jammu and I didn't know how his successor would take me in.

One day I expressed my anxiety on this score to Prof Manak Chand Khosla. He was kind enough to give me a letter of recommendation to Rai Bahadur Justice Devi Dayal Dhawan, who resided on Jail Road and was holding court inside the Lahore Central Jail. He wrote:

"*Manak Chand Khosla*

Jammu

29.xii.45

"Dear Rai Bahadur Sahib,

I understand that you stand in need of a suitable coach for your boy. I am very glad to recommend Mr. Shiv Nath, the bearer of this. He is known to me as an old student of the Prince of Wales College, Jammu. He had a brilliant academic career notwithstanding the fact that while a student he had to work not only to pay for his own education but to support his parents. He has been coaching my daughter and some other women students here and working quite satisfactorily. If you could pay him generously and give him the facilities of board and lodging you will not only be engaging an honest and capable coach for your son but will also be helping a promising young man. We have high hopes in him and I am confident that with your help and under your inspiring guidance he will come up to our expectations and do still better in life.

Yours Sincerely,

Sd/-

Manak Chand Khosla"

The Rai Bahadur was glad to engage me and on 2nd January 1946, I shifted from Hira Mandi to Jail Road. Dhawan Saheb made arrangement for my residence in his court office inside the Central Jail and meals with the family in his bungalow, 36, Jail Road, not far from the Jail. In addition I was to be

paid Rs.30/- per month. He also allowed me the use of a cycle belonging to his elder son Satish Dhawan (who later earned fame as a space scientist) who had completed his studies at Lahore and was away. The rest of the highly sophisticated and cultured family comprised of a very graceful Mrs. Dhawan whom we called Bee-ji, Ranjit, Dhawan Saheb's younger son whom I was engaged to coach morning and evening and two young daughters, Pimi and Baby.

I stayed on Jail Road for about six months. This period was more eventful and interesting, but strenuous. Some jottings in the diary bring to my mind some happenings and images and impressions.

January 6, 1946: Kapurthala House: Multitudes of people gathered to have a glimpse of the INA heroes Shah Nawaz Khan, Sehgal and Dhillon. No discipline. Loudspeakers failed several times and the murmuring of milling crowds multiplied into Babel. Besides the three INA heroes, Subhash Chandra Bose's brother Sarat Chandra Bose was also there. I felt a great thrill, the words "*Jai Hind*" resounded in my ears and all over my body and the slogan "*Lal Qilay se Ayi Awaz, Sehgal, Dhillon, Shah Nawaz*", coursed through my mind. I went without dinner that evening and slept on an empty stomach.

January 13: Yesterday I came across Krishna Pasricha in Lawrence Gardens. I had met her and her sister Rani in Srinagar at Maqbool Manzil.

"You have to coach Rani. She's so weak in Mathematics!" she said.

"But you yourself teach Mathematics in the Fateh Chand Girls College. Why don't you coach her?"

"No I cannot. From tomorrow you must come to our place."

And she gave me her Nisbet Road address. A couple of days earlier I had been approached by Masood Beg, a 1st year student of my English Composition class, with a request to coach him. He had said he lived nearby and would come to my place for the purpose. Thus I had two more tuitions at Rs. 40/- each besides Kumar on Ravi Road and Ranjit at Jail Road. Too much load – very exhausting.

In February, I had continuous tooth trouble with pain and swelling for a fortnight or so. Ultimately I had to land up in Dental Hospital. Dr. U. S. Malik pulled out a molar – my first molar to go – under chloroform.

On the 19th I heard about an unknown gang of Lahore responsible for four murders. On the 21st, further news came about two murders – one near the Nursery and the other in front of Atcheson College. A letter from home informed me about disturbances in Jammu. On 9th March I heard of a case of murder on Sundar Das Road and police firing in SD College and a demonstration of a crowd of Muslims protesting against the Punjab ministry for arresting some gangsters. On the same day, a class fellow of mine, Jagadish Datta, on his way to my place, was attacked by some Muslim youths who tried to snatch his books. I mentioned these incidents to Yaqoob, the court clerk, who also stayed in the Jail. He said, "Muslims asking for Pakistan is like asking for a house from a man who has none. We should first get freedom by forming a United Front of Hindus and Muslims and resist the British policy of 'Divide and Rule'." Masud Beg's father who had participated in the agitation against the Rowlatt Act in 1917, expressed similar views and said, "We Indians are fighting among ourselves, strengthening the Government of foreigners."

On two occasions I chanced to see hanged bodies brought out of Central Jail and placed in front of the Jail Gate.

On 16th March, I saw a hanged man carried on a cot by his relatives and placed on the lawn in front of the Jail Gate. They uncovered his face – it had turned black, drained of all blood. Someone felt his forehead and said, "*Tatta hai*", (it is warm). There were some whispers and someone said, "Let us not reveal it. Let us carry him away quietly. He might live." I wondered how man clings to hope to the last minute, even after that hope has been completely shattered. The man had been hanged for half an hour and blood had dried up within the first ten minutes. The relatives held their breath – not a cry, not a sob, not a sigh, not a drop of tear – they looked at the uncovered face, warmth slowly leaving it, bloodless, pale black. A woman put her finger in his mouth, trembling and kept fumbling, speechless. A sort of heaviness stole over me. I couldn't stand there any longer. They might burst out wailing. I didn't want to hear it, to see it.

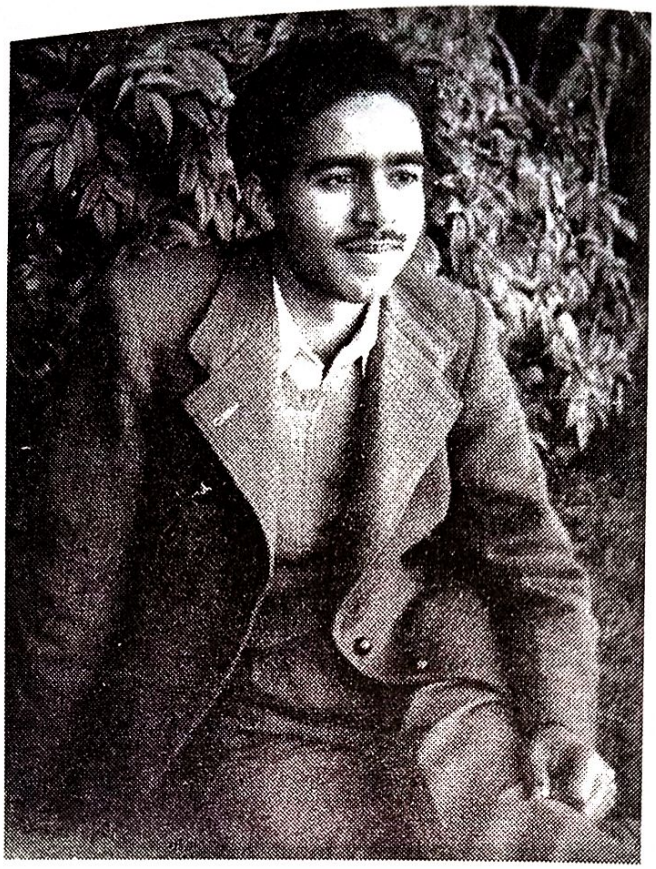
About a month and a quarter later, on 24th April, while returning from my morning walk at about 7.30 a.m., I saw crowds in front of the Central Jail gate. A *pahalwan*, wrestler, of Lahore, had been hanged and a lot of people were there to see him – now a lifeless lump that was alive and kicking some time back, warm blood coursing through his arteries, that wrestled, quarrelled, laughed and had in a moment of rashness stabbed a fellow mortal. Eyes half closed, marks of the rope on his neck, dark, bluish and lead coloured, the blackness of death writ large on his face. Some onlookers were shedding tears. A young rustic woman in clean, much-washed clothes, lips dyed red, who had come to see her

husband in jail, stopped to look at the dead body. A sigh escaped her red lips and she fainted.

I took five days off to accompany my friend Kailash Mehta's marriage party to Simla. We boarded the Kalka Mail at Lahore on the evening of 28th April. As the train was chugging in at Kalka station next morning, dawn broke over the hills. We got into the narrow gauge train. It was going up and up to Barog where we had lunch at about 1:00 p.m. We were informed that the Barog tunnel was the longest of the 103 tunnels en route. The compartments were filled with suffocating smoke and we were blackened all over – clothes, faces and all. The guard told us that the steam engine consumed six tons of coal from Kalka to Simla and the train did 7 miles in an hour. At Simla we were received and put up at Nabha House. On the 30th morning we went up the Jaaku Hill – 8000 feet above sea level. Hordes of monkeys and orange roses on the walls of the bungalows on the way. The procession after wedding was a sight – Kailash walking by the side of a rickshaw carrying his wife who was wearing a yellow *sari*, both looking serious, Kailash's father, Dr. Mehta, showering handfuls of coins over the rickshaw, street urchins rushing forth to pick them up and Rai Saheb Puri walking behind the ladies.

While the majority of those who had accompanied us from Lahore returned, I stayed back and saw Mr. T. R. Thorpe and his nursery, Boileauganj, the Viceregal Lodge Gate, the Cecil Hotel.

On the 1st morning we went to Summer Hill. Saw some women labourers breaking stones for the Viceregal Lodge. They were paid twelve annas i.e. three quarters of a rupee per square foot and they broke hardly one foot in a day. One woman, who was reclining against a stone, was saved from a black snake's bite when a man walking with



Shivanath

us noticed it when it was just 5-6 inches away from the woman, curving towards her head and killed it. From there we went to Chadwick View and saw the bungalows of Sir Maharaj Singh and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur (Manor Villa) shown to us by one Amrit Kumar Baaghi – a First Year student of DAV College, Lahore who had absconded to escape his arrest – ordered for making a speech. Went up to Prospect Hill, the Krerda Devi Hill.

On 2nd morning we went to the Motor Barrier where Mahatma Gandhi was expected at 9 or 10 a.m. We learnt that he had already come. On the way back we saw Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru in the backseat of a car. We shouted "*Jai Hind*", "*Inquilab Zindabad*". The car slowed down and then picked up speed. Went to Chadwick Lodge – saw two ladies bringing a *takhtposh* out. I offered to help but they refused. Then I approached Sardar Patel to allow us to see Gandhiji. He said it would not be possible before evening. We waited outside. We had Gandhiji's *darshan* when he came out to lie on the

takhtposh for massage. He was in a *khadi dhoti* and a *khadi* piece of cloth slung across his shoulders. He lay there, reading a book with a green cover, while Peareylalji massaged him.

Near the gate of the Viceregal Lodge we saw Pt. Nehru and Acharya Kripalani. I wished them "*Jai Hind*". Pt. Nehru responded with "*Jai Hind*", one hand raised, the other holding the reins of a beautiful white horse with red spots. I left Simla after this. It was in the same car which had brought Pandit Nehru the previous day. A seat in it cost me four rupees....

Those days on Jail Road were very strenuous, full of tension and overwork – attending M.A. classes with Professors Dickenson, Siraj ud-Din, Varma, Ugrasen and Nanda, taking the first year Composition Class, going to the libraries to borrow and return books, reading them, jotting down notes and taking four tuitions. My main sources of relaxation were: sitting in the Lawrence Gardens which was close by, attending odd stimulating extra lectures, extra reading, occasional visits to the movie theatre to see a picture or a chat with an old friend and sometimes discussions at Dhawan Saheb's dinner table.

Dinnertime at Dhawan Saheb's place was usually a lively, chatty affair. Dhawan Saheb, sitting at the head of the large table, would start a subject and get all of us involved. Bee-ji, radiating grace and dignity, sat next to him on one side of the table. One day, Dhawan Saheb started a discussion on "What is Intelligence?" which lasted for three days. On another day every one of us was asked to narrate the most memorable incident in his/her life. On still another day, the most wicked thing one had done in life.

Occasionally I went over to my old friends – Vishwnath Datta in the Govt. College Hostel, Kailash

Mehta in Krishnanagar, Anupam Dhar, Bashir, Basrur in Ewing Hall. I also remember two very interesting and informative lectures – one on "Persia's Contribution to Culture" by Hadi Hasan and the other on "Rabindranath Tagore" by our Prof. Ugrasen. Hadi Hasan's lecture in the University was delightful – full of humorous anecdotes and quotations and information on things like Persian mysticism and Persian delicacy of line and colour in painting. Prof. Ugrasen's lecture in the Discussion Group was scholarly and comprehensive, full of information and analysis. He said that Tagore was a voluminous writer, an innovator in style, a great musicologist, a great story writer but not a very successful dramatist, that his genius was lyrical and there was a quality of repose in his poetry, that as a politician he was more internationalist than nationalist and hence could not become a popular leader. He said that *Chitra* was performed in Paris and later at the Plaza theatre in Lahore by boys and girls of Shantiniketan in 1937. He also spoke about Tagore's doctrine of *Jeevan Devata* – life force and his personal God who came in the form of a flute player, a bridegroom, a king and that his conception of relationship between individual human soul and God was like that of a wave and the Ocean or a sunray and the Sun, both having separate existences but also one as an integral part of the Ocean and the Sun.

During this period I managed to read three novels – Thomas Hardy's *Tess D'Urbervilles* and *Return of the Native* and Rabindranath Tagore's *Gora* and see four pictures in the nine anna class – *Madame Curie, Mrs Minniver, Random Harvest, Rebecca* and in Hindi *Kotnis*

ki Amar Kahani. I liked the acting of Greer Garson and Walter Pidgeon in the English films and Shantaram and Jaishri in the Hindi film.

The Lawrence Gardens afforded me the maximum relaxation. It was in the Lawrence Gardens that I met Prof. Sahib Ram, my alter ego, a self-made man, renowned mathematical genius who had been introduced to me by Dr. Siddeshwar Varma in a letter of 1943. I could confide in him and tell him about my difficulties and anxieties and worries. Once he told me that he had started tuition work with a nominal fee of Re.1/- per month. I too had started coaching the son of the Harijan councillor of my *mohalla* in Jammu with Re.1/- per month as remuneration. He always gave me correct advice and carried himself joyfully.

On the morning of 4th July 1946, I relinquished my assignment at Jail Road, returned the cycle loaned to me, collected my fees for the previous three months, paid a flying visit to Amritsar, returned to Lahore, picked up my meagre baggage from the cloakroom and took the night train to Jammu.

Summer vacation time at Jammu was very stressful, full of psychological suffering, mental tension and physical strain. Mother had had a fall and injured her back grievously. Reduced to a bundle of bones, she talked incoherently as if in a dream, in broken sentences, repeating them, not eating anything, not agreeing to be taken to a doctor. She was full of whims and the noise of sparrows, calls of birds, cawing of crows, a cough or a sneeze, bothered her. She had fits of wry moods when some spirit seemed to have taken possession of her and babbled meaningless things. My father and I felt utterly helpless. A week later our cow,

Jamuna, started shaking her head sideways, grinding her teeth, tossing about her legs and thumping them on the ground. She was in pain, suffering with some white liquid discharge. Her face was drawn and showed an unutterable pain. She looked blank and helpless and her eyes bore a strange expressionless look. We felt miserable. Later in the evening she delivered, prematurely, a beautiful, hairless calf which passed away soon after coming out. During the following two days she was in terrible travail. No medicine worked. She just stood there under the tree, could not wag her tail to brush off flies. She excreted some blood and looked at us helplessly. Her breathing became hard and strained. And she breathed her last and lay there, legs stretched out, mouth open, white teeth visible, eyes dull and lifeless. My heart swelled up to my throat and streamed through my eyes. I went in, threw myself on the bed and wept. Mother gave a loud shriek and cried like mad. After she had shed copious tears, she said, "*Koyi jhund sulakkana, koyi khund sulakkbana,* (Some brides are auspicious, some cows are auspicious). We shall never have a cow like Jamuna. With whom shall I talk now? Waiting for you to come, I used to tell her, 'Jamuna, see, Shiv is coming. Look, there he is,' and Jamuna would perk up and look out towards the lane. She loved you so much!"

I too loved her dearly, patted her. She was a second mother to me, so to say. I had grown up on her milk. She had also brought luck to me – success in studies. I felt that she was the incarnation of some noble soul. Mother said somebody had cast a spell – done some *jadu-tona.* Jamuna had taken the impact of it on herself to save us.

During those days I went for my morning walks listlessly, carrying on my consciousness the weight of suffering – the drawn face of my mother and the image

of Jamuna – white *tilak* on her forehead, small horns, black nostrils, liquid loving eyes – and sat on a promontory to see the rising sun spreading its magic over the greenery laden trees, low hills and the Tawi waters, but failing to dispel the clouds of depression on my mind. I took up five tuitions – the Bedi sisters, Shrimati Shakti Sharma, Shrimati Mohinder Singh and Sharmishtha and Lalita Khosla – some for a month, some for a month and some days. This was partly to divert my mind from the sorrow and suffering at home and partly to earn a little money. I could not concentrate on my own reading. I knew tuition work was sucking me dry – speaking for so many hours and adjusting to so many different situations.

On the evening of 5th September, I spent about two hours with Prof Manak Chand Khosla, a very kind hearted, soft-speaking, compassionate person. His company was always soothing and one could open one's heart to him. That day he opened his heart to me. He had been appointed as the first Principal of the first Women's College – Mahila College – in Jammu. The college had started functioning in a government building overlooking the Parade Ground. He seemed to have ideas about women's education and wanted to introduce new subjects relevant to women's role in life – courses in home science, cooking, laundering, needlework and so on. And when he told me about his late wife who had passed away in 1932, it seemed to me that he had her as the role model for girls. He said that though poor in health, Mrs. Khosla was a great lover of art and artefacts. She learnt music and knitting. To learn painting she got admitted to the Technical Institute. She learnt cake making from His Highness's steward and paid him Rs.200. She also learnt how to make Bengali sweets from one Mrs. Biswas and new styles and cuts from tailors.

She called *halwais* and learnt from them the preparation of various sweets. She was also fond of reading and subscribed to magazines like *Geographical Magazine* and women's journals. He also mentioned that the present premises for the college were unsuitable and inadequate and he was looking for more accommodation to start new courses.

News of communal riots in the Punjab, famine in Bengal and death and misery all round were disconcerting and depressing. On 22nd September, there were communal disturbances in Jammu and some Hindus and Muslims were reported to have been killed. Curfew was imposed. The next day I left for Lahore.

I had decided not to take up any tuition work during the last six months at Lahore. Things were cheap those days – hostel room rent was nine to ten rupees a month, mess charges 22 to 30 rupees, a glass of milk or *lassi* at Bhagwan Singh's shop in Anarkali or near Regal Cinema for 3 or 4 annas, carrots, oranges and bananas for some *paise*, a bottle of lemon squash for one rupee thirteen annas, cinema tickets 9 annas to three rupees four annas, railway fare from Jammu to Lahore two rupees one anna. At Landa bazaar, where I bought a volume of complete works of Shakespeare for four rupees, one could buy second hand books cheap. However, I did not have to spend on room rent. Triloki Nathji, who had two rooms in the outhouse of Theosophical Lodge at the mouth of Krishna Nagar, a middle class locality, allowed me the use of the smaller room for my residence and also made arrangements for my boarding in the DAV College Hostel. Triloki Nathji, from Jammu, was a lecturer in DAV College, Lahore, who had dedicated his life to DAV Society. In the DAV College Hostel mess I came across two young men from Jammu and Kashmir

staying in the hostel – Shiv Prasad Raina and Maikash Kashmiri – both budding poets – the former in English and the latter in Urdu. Now I did not have any tuition work and devoted myself completely to my studies, with occasional extra-study – Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, DH Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Phoenix* – a book on DH Lawrence written after his death, Pearl S Buck's *Dragon-seed*, *Olive Tree*, a collection of essays of Aldous Huxley and his novel *Point Counter Point*.

Triloki Nathji led the very simple and austere life of a devotee, doing *Ram-naam*. I also started sitting with him for *Ram-naam* recitation. Soon I realised that I was losing concentration, with the subconscious overpowering and interfering with the conscious. Sometimes I felt I was moving in a dream. I thought of one subject and after a while, the train of thought on that subject got submerged under a flood of new associations springing up mysteriously from somewhere, unrelated and abstruse. I began with the thought of Aristotle and his theory of tragedy and the face of Kitty with dark beautiful penetrating eyes or that of Kailash, the Amritsar girl, suddenly surfaced from somewhere and then some other images pushed away Kitty and Kailash, until I quite forgot what I originally contemplated. I could not trace the development back to the starting point. I felt that I was being mercilessly tyrannised by the subconscious. I sat for meditation and my mind started wandering all the more, fishing up to the surface all sorts of mud and mire and rags lying down somewhere deep in the subconscious. I pronounced *Ram-naam* twice or thrice consciously and then went on repeating it mechanically, my mind wandering somewhere else. It was quite disturbing. Things came to me in images and

my thinking was like a series of pictures – haphazard unrelated moments, scenes and faces. Triloki Nathji advised me to let things move. "Think of the perfect if you want to be perfect. Think and talk of rishis and yogis if you want to be one," said Triloki Nathji, "The highest is attainable. What is required is suffering, intense suffering on the physical and mental planes. It is like labour pain. It is a process of churning. One can be in tune with the Infinite." I did not understand all this. The daily routine went on as usual, unmindful of what was happening in the city elsewhere – growing incidents of communal riots, stabbings, fires. In March our classes were over and we were asked to wait for announcement of examination dates. But the conditions deteriorated. The day I wanted to go to the Railway Station to catch a train for Jammu, I could get a tonga with great difficulty. On the way, I saw flames of fire here and there. I heaved a sigh of relief when I got into the train bound for Jammu.

Back home, I found Jammu comparatively peaceful, with people going about their activities as usual. Growing political consciousness and intellectual vibrancy were finding expression in political movements and literary activities. Sheikh Mohammed Abdulla led "National Conference" was dominating the political stage – it had drafted a new and elaborate constitution of the State – called "Naya Kashmir" (New Kashmir) and was agitating against the Maharaja's rule, raising the slogan of "Quit Kashmir" and demanding cancellation of Amritsar Agreement under which Kashmir was placed under the rule of Maharaja Gulab Singh, the founder of the Jammu and Kashmir State. Some intellectuals of Jammu like Girdharilal Dogra, Trilochan Dutt, Balram Bhasin and some students of the Prince of Wales College like Ved Bhasin were actively

Ved Bhasin

involved in its Programme. I remember to have attended a "Study Circle" meeting under the auspices of the National Conference organised by Balaram Bhasin.

Activities of the Muslim Conference were also gathering strength. Rashtriya Svayam Sevak Sangh had established itself in the city and was holding *shakhas* in the premises of Dewan Mandir. Two persons were prominent in its activities – a local leader, Balraj Madhok and an outsider, Jagadishji. A few Dogra intellectuals and writers, who were writing in Hindi and Urdu, were concerned about Dogri and were carrying on the work of the nascent Dogri Samstha, established in 1944, without any tangible support. Prominent among them were a local college lecturer Prof. Ram Nath Shastri, a journalist Dharam Chand Prashant, an artist Sansar Chand Badu, a poet Dinu Bhai Pant, an astrologer-writer Bhagwat Prasad Sathe and a college student Narayan Dutt Misra.

The British Government in India had decided to quit and hand over power to the political leaders and divide India into two countries – residue India and Pakistan, a separate homeland for Muslims. The rulers of Indian States were to be given the choice to join either India or Pakistan.

On 4th August, Mahatma Gandhi arrived in Jammu from Srinagar and addressed a prayer meeting in the evening in Durga Nivas which was packed to capacity with people. He said, "It is the people of Jammu and Kashmir who will decide whether the State should join India or Pakistan." Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh people were very upset at this pronouncement and were heard picking holes in Gandhiji's policies and views. On the 15th August came Independence and with it the Partition of the country, massive movements of people with horrific news of mass slaughter, burning of buildings and shops, rapes and plunder, stabbing and shooting. The news of Lahore going to Pakistan was very depressing. Jammu was flooded with refugees from the Punjab – caravans of harassed looking people carrying bundles and boxes of their belongings. They spread themselves on roads, in *dharamshalas*, temples and schools, wherever they could find a place.

Official buildings in the city were illuminated and the Maharaja sent telegrams of congratulations to the governments of India and Pakistan and offered to have a "Stand-still Agreement" with them. Pakistan accepted the offer but simultaneously initiated moves to annex it – by encouraging and inspiring members of the Muslim Conference to start disturbances, creating pressure on the Maharaja, by stopping supplies of essential goods to the State, by organising attacks by tribals on the borders of the State. Daily there would be news about attacks on and slaughter of Hindus in the Punjab – so many killed, so many wounded, so-and-so place set on fire, so-and-so bazaar looted. Tales of atrocities told by the refugees were horrifying. In October 1947, Pakistan closed down the train service from Sialkot to Jammu and blocked the import of commodities meant for the State. The last train from

Sialkot brought a horde of Hindu and Sikh refugees. Communal violence spread in Jammu also with communal polarisation. Two Muslim mohallas of Talab Khatikan and Mohalla Ustad were subjected to harassment with water and food being denied to the residents. Gangs of Hindu fanatics moved about looting and killing people of the other community. In early November arrangements were made to transport Muslims from Talab Khatikan, the hotbed of Muslim communalism, to Sialkot, in lorries. They were reported to have been waylaid and the occupants mercilessly massacred. Pressure from Pakistan at the borders of the State and propaganda from Radio Pakistan was pushed up. The state forces had to be dispersed all along the 450 mile border. Muslim elements – both officers and other ranks – in the State forces deserted to join the raiding tribesmen. People started worrying as to what would happen to the 20% Hindu population of the State if it went to Pakistan or if Pakistan succeeded in annexing it forcibly. There were reports of slaughter of Hindus in Muslim majority areas in the State, like Mirpur.

Nature seemed unconcerned about what human beings were doing to their fellow human beings as some entries in my diary show:

August18: As I got up from my afternoon nap, I saw some sparrows playing and bathing in the pot of water placed for them. A big black ant was crawling towards some grains of rice lying close to the water pot. A sparrow pounced on it, picked it up and tossed it up. Another sparrow picked it as it fell and cut it into two and the two sparrows shared the spoil. A *gatari*, bulbul, with yellow beak and feet landed nearby. I had once

asked mother, "How come the gatari's beak and feet are yellow while the rest of the body is dark?" She had said, "In Satyuga, every living being could take out and put back his/her limbs. Once the gatari went to a peacock and said, "I have to attend the wedding reception of a close relative – please lend me your beak and feet for a day. On return from the function I shall give back to you what is yours and take back what is mine. The peacock, a simpleton, tried to put her off but ultimately acceded to her request and put on the dark beak and feet of the gatari. The gatari never went back to the peacock. Thereafter whenever the peacock dances and after the dance glances at his feet, he regrets his mistake and tears drop from his eyes. The peahen drinks up these tears and conceives." What a clean and romantic way of procreation! I wish this method of procreation was available to human beings.

August 22: More and more news of senseless killings, tales of woe and suffering from the Punjab. Shadow of suffering hovers over the State also and the constricted atmosphere of Jammu is stifling. I feel like a bird that had ventured out in the open for the first time and was driven back to its nest by a storm. I don't know when the storm will subside.

October 24: I am sick to my soul. There's a dead weight, gloom and uneasiness. Yesterday I saw 20 or 25 tongawallahs – Kashmiris who had brought apples from Srinagar – going home. How happy they looked! Could they have dreamt of the doom that would overtake them two or three hours later? I heard in the evening that they had been finished off and that a car had been stopped, looted, two girls abducted, one man killed … horrible! And I could not read yesterday. This heart-sickness wouldn't let me. And this morning Amarchand told me

that one Kashmiri who had escaped yesterday, was about to be finished off and that he had seen the victim and the victimizer. And just opposite Ved Mandir under the trees we saw about ten persons – an old man and two or three girls and children – lying butchered. Prof. Triloki Nathji and Mr. Rameshwar were with me. A horrible sight. They were poor people, defenceless ... Hey Ram! What has happened to people? All sense of humanity, all human values have been thrown to the winds. And when I hear some of these Hindus relishing these stories and feeling happy in killing Muslims and talking of their brutalities with pride, it drives me mad. Is this the spirit of Hinduism? Aren't these people dealing a death blow to Hinduism – these reactionary forces? How unjust that a man should die simply because he happens to be a Hindu or a Muslim! And yet! I think the whole atmosphere is infected. Strange influences are aboard.

On the 27th October, Maharaja Hari Singh of Jammu and Kashmir decided to opt for India and requested the Government of India for military assistance to halt the advance of Pakistani tribals who were advancing towards Srinagar, the summer capital of the State. The same day detachments of Indian troops landed at Srinagar Airport and with the active assistance of the citizens, managed to push back the invaders. The role of Brigadier Rajinder Singh of the State forces and Lt. Col. Dewan Ranjit Rai in blunting the invaders' attack was outstanding and both of them were awarded Mahavir Chakra posthumously.

Sometime in early November the Government of India decided to establish a radio station at Jammu to counter the virulent propaganda of Pakistan Radio. A team of All India Radio staff, consisting of Harbans Singh Bedi from the Programme side and Inderjit Sachdeva from the Engineering branch arrived and

Diary entry

24th October 1947

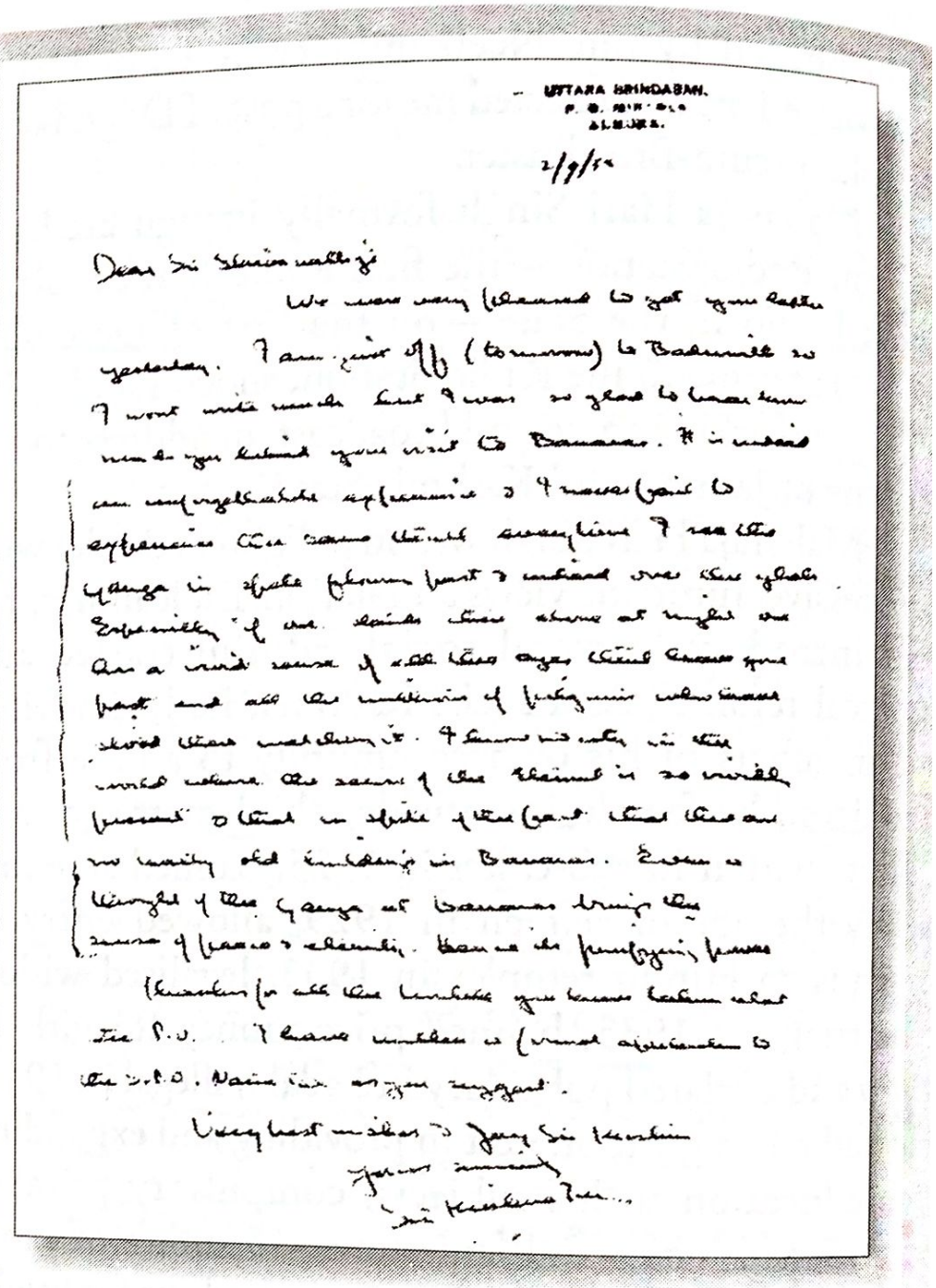
I'm sick to my soul. There's a dead weight, gloom, & uneasiness & I don't know what ~~xxx~~ damps my spirits. Yesterday I saw those 20 or 25 Kongawallahs – Kashmiris who had brought apples from Srinagar – going home. How happy they looked! Could they have dreamt of the doom that would overtake them two or three hours later? And I heard in the evening that they had been finished off, that a car had been stopped, both the girls abducted, one man killed .. Horrible! And ~~this~~ I could not read yesterday. This heart-sickness wouldn't let me. And this morning Marchand told me that one Kashmiri who had escaped yesterday, was about to be finished off that he had seen the victim of the victimizer. And just opposite the Ved Mandir, under the ~~xx~~ trees we saw about ten persons – an old man & two or three girls & children – lying butchered. Prof Trilokinathji & Mr Ramchandra were with me. A horrible sight. They were poor people, defenceless, .. Hey Ram! What has happened to people? ~~Humanity is reeling back to the beast~~. All sense of humanity, all human values have been thrown to the winds. And when I hear some of these Hindus relishing these stories of killing, laughing & telling of their brutalities with pride, it drives me mad. Is it the spirit of Hinduism?

started work in the block of three or four rooms of Shri Ranbir Singh High School – the same rooms where I had started studying in the sixth class. One day I approached them and volunteered to translate and broadcast news in Dogri. They accepted my offer. I began with collecting the local newspapers, picking up important news items, translating them into Dogri and broadcasting them. Balaram Bhasin's sister joined us as an Announcer. This arrangement lasted a few days, the preliminary testing period. A few days later, a selection

team headed by one Neelkanth, came from Delhi, interviewed me and selected me for a post of Dogri News Translator-cum-Broadcaster.

Maharaja Hari Singh formally inaugurated the Jammu Radio Station – the first Radio Station of All India Radio in the State – on the first of December 1947. He came to the Radio Station, shook hands with all those working there and broadcast an address to the citizens of Jammu and Kashmir State.

Maharaja Hari Singh was an enlightened ruler with progressive, futuristic views and nationalist leanings. He had introduced several social, administrative and political reforms. As a social reformer, he had advised the members of his own community to abjure from practices like female infanticide, child marriages and differentiation in sub-castes in 1925, banned smoking below the age of sixteen in 1929, allowed entry of harijans to Hindu temples in 1932, legalised widow remarriage in 1933, banned price money for girls in 1940 and declared polyandry in Ladakh illegal in 1941. He had taken great interest in providing and expanding free education to his subjects, compulsory primary education in cities and large towns, opening of more educational institutions, grant of scholarships for bright boys of the State to get training outside the State in areas like forestry, veterinary science, engineering, printing, etc. He had also sanctioned provision of medical facilities, opening of hospitals, water supply schemes in the *kandi* or arid areas and improvement of Banihal Cart Road and Kohala Jehlam Valley Road. In administration, he had established an administrative reforms commission, streamlined some departments and opened new departments of agriculture, village development, town planning, industries, medical and visitors' bureau for tourists. He had established the High



UTTARA BRINDABAN,
P. O. [illegible]
ALMORA.

2/9/54

Dear Sri Shivanathji

We were very pleased to get your letter yesterday. I am sorry Mr (to mention) is Badrinath so I could write much but I was so glad to hear from you to know that your visit to Banaras. It is indeed an unforgettable experience & I never fail to experience the same thrill everytime I see the Ganga in spate flowing past & indeed over the ghats. Especially if one stands there alone at night one has a vivid sense of all that ages still remain your heart and all the traditions of India which Banaras stood there and stands for. I have no words in the world where the secret of the thrill is to vividly present to mind in spite of the fact that there are no really old buildings in Banaras. Even a glimpse of the Ganga at Banaras brings the sense of peace & eternity. Banaras the Pundyo's home

Thanks for all the trouble you have taken about the P.O. I have written a formal application to the D.P.O. Waiting for an early reply.

Very best wishes to you Sri Kanchan

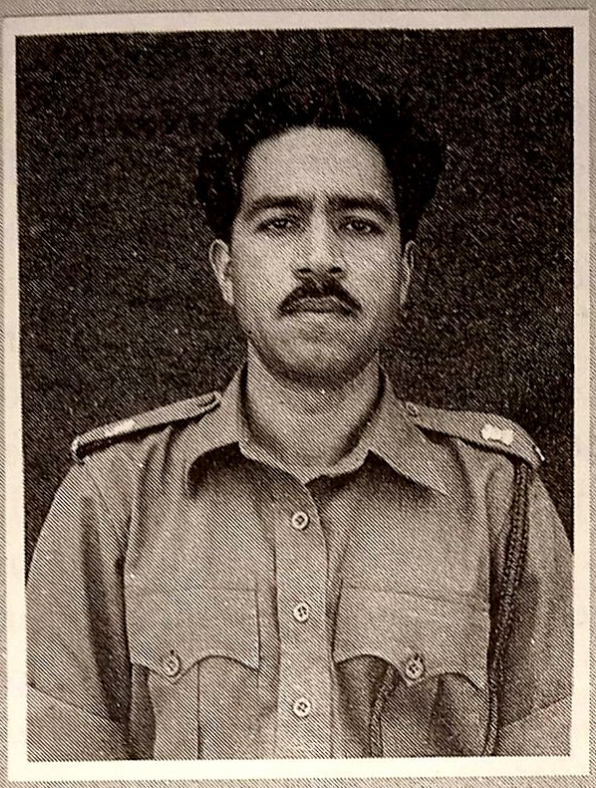
Yours sincerely
Sri Kanchan Jee...

"May the very dust of this earth become honied" – Rigveda

My hope, I wish You a peaceful and sweet new year.

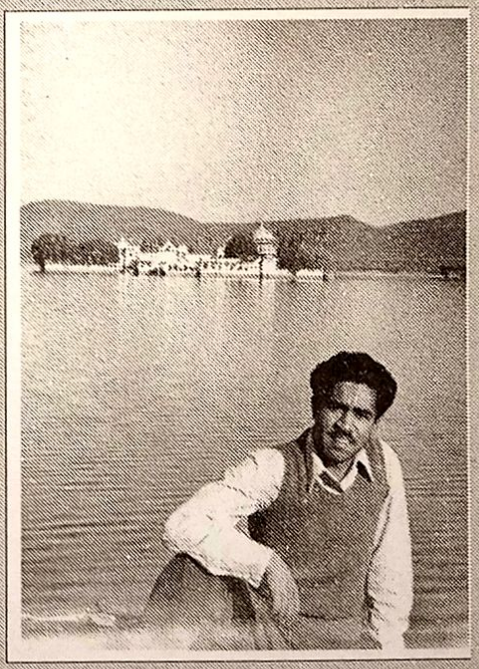
Yours,
Siddheshwar varma,
C/o The Post Master Ludhiana
1/44

1. Letter of Prof J.L. Kal
2. Letter of Prof Siddeshwar Varma



In Uniform

Reading the paper



In fornt of Bahu Fort

Court of Adjudicature and Judicial Advisory Board as early as 1928 and later the Jammu and Kashmir Bank. In the political area, he had established Praja Sabha, a legislature, in 1934, with an element of elected representatives. In 1947, he, a Hindu ruler of a Muslim majority state, was faced with a very difficult situation. There was mounting pressure and aggression from Pakistan. There was pressure of the popular leadership of the State. There were desertions of Muslim elements in the State forces. There were senseless killings and massacres. He was a harassed, much misunderstood and misrepresented man. But at the Radio Station inauguration ceremony, he was affable and relaxed and carried himself with dignity and inherent pride.

On 10th December, a telegram was received from Delhi: "*Despatch Shivnath and Harbans Lal Chopra to Delhi. Arrangements have been made to book seats for them in a plane leaving Jammu on the 11th December.*"

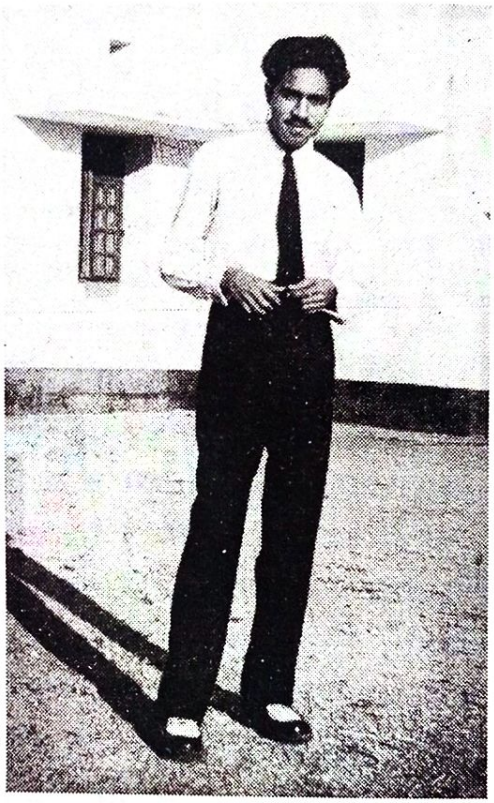
6

On the morning of 11 December 1947, Harbans Lal Chopra and I boarded an Air Force Dakota aircraft at Satwari airstrip in Jammu for Delhi. At Safdarjang Airport New Delhi, we were received by Prabhat Mukherji, Assistant Station Director, All India Radio who took us to the AIR hostel for external services staff in B Block of Western House. A room in the hostel had been allotted for us. At 4:30 in the afternoon, a staff car picked us up from the hostel and brought us to the Broadcasting House on Parliament Street. A working room in the hutment block adjoining the main building had been set apart for the newly created Dogri-Kashmiri Unit. The block housed offices of units of some other languages like Punjabi and Oriya and some administrative offices. We were introduced to Zinda Lal Kaul, Shyam Lal Dhar and Ali Mohammed Tariq of the Kashmiri Unit. Soon, strips of news items in English started arriving from the News Room in the main building. We translated them as they came, in ones and twos, at intervals. Dogri bulletin was ready by 6.15 p.m.

and at 6.30, I was in the sound proof studio in the main building, reading the news – "*Eh, All India Radio Ai, Oohn tus Dogri ch Khabaran Suno*". Thus on 11th December 1947, the first news bulletin in Dogri from All India Radio was broadcast by me.

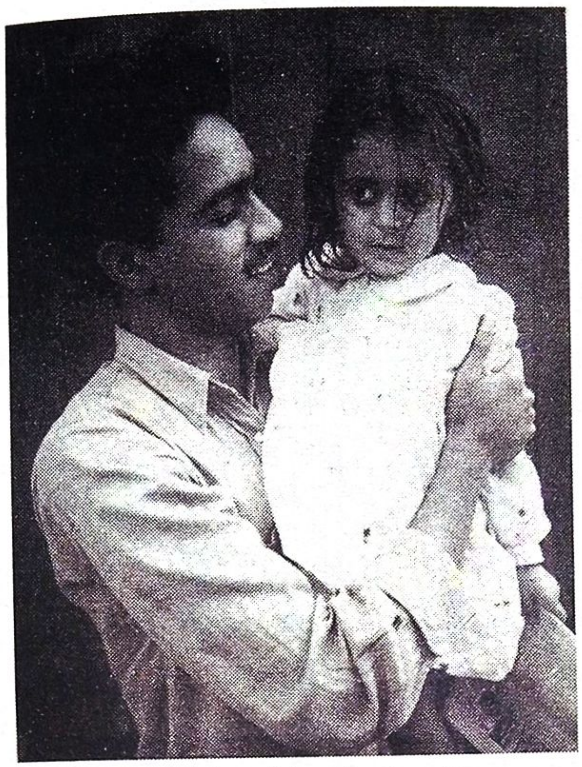
After a few days, Chopra's family arrived and I shifted to an independent single room in the hostel.

It was quite exciting to be staying in Western House on Curzon Road (later renamed Kasturba Gandhi Marg)



Shivnath in Western House

and walking to work in the Broadcasting House on Parliament Street (renamed Sansad Marg), both places in the heart of New Delhi – a beautiful green city with broad tree-lined, tarred roads, cycle tracks, flower-bedecked roundabouts, very little vehicular traffic and seeing important people from all over India, some of them just across the road in the then Constitution House hutments (replaced by UNCTAD hostel). Western House was a very convenient and ideal place of residence for me and I managed to stay there for about two years, even after my unit was transferred to Internal Services of



An Afghan friend's daughter

All India Radio and I had become ineligible for accommodation there. Everything of interest to me was within walking distance – Broadcasting House on Parliament Street for work, Connaught Place and Bengali market for eateries, entertainment and shopping, India Gate lawns and Kingsway (later designated Rajpath) for relaxation and walks and a small park adjoining Baroda House which was accessible through a wicket gate from our block, for serious studies and preparation for examinations. In the Western House itself, there were news translators and broadcasters of bulletins of foreign languages like Arabic, Burmese, Chinese, Persian and Pushto. Interaction with them was not only interesting and instructive but also beneficial – Sultan of the Arabic unit gifted me a comfortable baby chair which is still with me, in use, a Burmese newsreader sold a second hand Raleigh cycle for Rs. 150/- and the Chinese S. T. Yen gave me friendship, taste of Chinese food and jasmine tea. Work in the All India Radio was interesting to start with – one saw political leaders, intellectuals,

thinkers, well-known artists like Ravi Shankar and Jutika Roy who came there to record and broadcast their programmes. One felt important sitting in the air-conditioned studio broadcasting news, conscious of one's voice radiating on airwaves far and wide and reaching millions of listeners. News of the happenings in the world and in the country came to the News Room and Pran Chopra, perhaps the youngest News Editor, and his assistants, edited them for different language units and sent them across with a peon as they came. Nirad C. Chaudhari, a diminutive, mercurial, restless man, formally dressed in suit and tie, wrote five-minute commentaries in English on current topical affairs that were broadcast after the news bulletins. Sometimes he was late and came hobbling to the unit room with his write-up and we had to translate it in a hurry before rushing off to the studio. There was a certain glamour and exclusiveness about the place and those working there felt that glamour reflected in them; like those working in films. For the duration when our newly started Dogri-Kashmiri unit was under External Services, we were called staff artists and paid a monthly salary of Rs. 200/- which was a lot of money those days.

Morning walks from India Gate to Central Vista were exhilarating. On some days, I noticed Babu Rajendra Prasad, President of the Constituent Assembly, taking a stroll on Kingsway. Shah Nawaz Khan, of the Indian National Army fame, was a regular walker on the grassy lawns alongside Kingsway and he joined me sometimes and talked about his hero Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and his I.N.A. experiences nostalgically. There was only one Exhibition Hall in New Delhi those days, the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society hall on Parliament Street, close to Broadcasting House, where I saw some exhibitions of paintings. The hall was later

knocked down to make room for a multi-storeyed building to meet the growing accommodation requirements of AIR and Doordarshan and the Society was relocated in a new building at the end of Old Mill Road (renamed Rafi Marg).

Work in the Dogri-Kashmiri unit was fairly routine. Sometimes some news were disturbing. On January 30, 1948, a news item, a single item on a thin strip of paper – "Gandhi shot at" – stunned us. Ours was one of the earliest language bulletins to broadcast it. I broadcast it in Dogri tearfully. I was so dazed and distressed that I could not sleep that night. I remember having followed the funeral cortege of Mahatma Gandhi's last journey with Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel seated by the side of his body. Another procession that I remember was the first Republic Day Parade on January 26, 1950; it was much simpler and shorter and followed a different route from the route adopted later on from Rajpath to India Gate to Curzon Road and Connaught Place and beyond. These two occasions were emotion-charged, two extremes of emotion – sorrow and depression on the one and joy and pride on the other. I have also very pleasant memories of walking from Curzon Road to Connaught Place for a snack or meal at one of the restaurants – York, Volga, Alps, Quality, Piccadilly, Lakshmi, Madras Hotel, Wengers, Davicos or a cup of coffee at the India Coffee House on Queensway (later renamed Janpath) and walking down Parliament Street to Connaught Place after work, where one could sit in Central Park and have a clear view of Jama Masjid minarets on one side and domes of Central Secretariat on the other, doing some window-shopping in the colonnaded verandas or browsing through books at two or three bookshops there.

After settling down, I started serious preparations for the postponed M.A. examination of the Punjab University for which dates and examination centres were announced, Delhi being one of them. On some days two of my old class fellows, K. Lalit who had stood first in the matriculation examination of the Punjab University and Prashant Kumar Mitra, came and exchanged notes.

Preparation for the examination had kept me absorbed mostly with books and notes. After the examination was over, I felt lonely with an intense longing for female companionship. There were young girls galore in the adjoining A, C & D blocks of Western House, most of them decrepit looking refugee girls, victims of Partition, who were receiving vocational training in Curzon Road hutments. Sitting in the veranda of my room overlooking one of their blocks, I looked at them, just as one looks at birds in flight or flowers in a park or like one sitting in a drifting boat, seeing waves ruffled up by the movement of the boat. Coleridge's poem, *The Ancient Mariner* came to mind – "Water, water everywhere, not a drop to drink." I did not find them attractive enough. Mr. Gran, head of the Pashto Unit, who had seen pomegranate-complexioned, blooming girls and women back home in Afghanistan, called them *koyala-lakadi*, wood-charcoal – bloodless cheeks, sable complexions.

I had resolved to observe brahmacharya till the age of 25 but it did not stop me from looking at girls and it always gave me a feeling of joy to see the beauty of the female face and figure. One evening, as I came out of Broadcasting House after duty, I came across my old flame, Kitty, walking on the pavement of Parliament Street. I learnt that she was working as an Assistant in the Federal Public Service Commission, on the top floor of Parliament House building and was delayed in office

that day.

"Where do you stay?" I asked.

"I have got government accommodation in the Gol Dak Khana Chummeries."

(The Chummeries have since been demolished and the land has been taken over by Gurudwara Bangla Sahib).

I walked with her. From the roundabout (now called Patel Chowk) on Parliament Street, we turned left on Ashoka Road.

"What do you do in the evenings?" she asked.

"After the news bulletin, I walk down Parliament Street to Connaught Place, sit for some time in Central Park, watching people going up and down, do some window-shopping, pick up some book from Ramakrishna's or Galgotia's, go and sit in a corner in some restaurant, order tea or coffee, ice cream or *pakoras* and watch the movement of people, catching snatches of their conversation sometimes and get some idea of the goings-on in the Capital."

I felt a certain ease and warmth in her company. Soon we were at the gate of the Chummeries.

"Why don't you drop in sometimes after your duty? It is so near and I am always at home in the evenings."

"With pleasure," I said and took leave.

I called on her a couple of times after that, with intervals. If I did not go to her for sometime, she would ring me up in the Unit at Broadcasting House. Our fondness and interest in each other was growing slowly and steadily. I felt a surge of emotion, an overwhelming love for her. And I penned a letter to her:

"My dearest,

My mind is full of scorpions and I cannot read, concentrate or think coherently … I have reasoned in vain against the reasoning

of the heart and the inner conflict has left me a nervous wreck. You are my first love, the centre of my purest affections and however far I wandered, I couldn't get away from what I thought was the centre of my life. I feel almost mad to see you but then I stifle my feelings. It keeps me depressed. It is Amarendra who initiated me in the first year to take interest in girls, look at them and talk about them ... I looked at you and was attracted. Your eyes were pure champagne and your voice was music to my ears. I just looked at you. Your sight sent my heart aflutter and I felt shy ... I did not know your feelings, if any, towards me. You were the polestar of my affections.... My love for you is pure. I'm not keen on marriage. Sheel Mittal says he loves you and wants to marry you. Okay. My tendencies are towards renunciation and bhakti. I believe in loving silently. I am a very ordinary person and consider myself no more than an instrument of the Divine, meant to serve others."

However, I did not post the letter – it appeared too emotional and sentimental and remained lying amongst my papers.

In July I learnt from K. Lalit, from Mt. Abu, that the result of M.A. examination was out and he had ascertained the marks obtained by us through his sources. Three of us had got first division marks – Baldev Singh, K. Lalit and myself. I went over to Kitty to inform her about my result. She appeared quite excited and said, "Now you must prepare for the I.A.S. examination. I shall get you the admission form from the Federal Public

Service Commission." She brought the form and I filled it and gave it to her with the fee in the shape of Indian Postal Orders, for submission to the Commission.

On another evening, when I called on her, she said, "I want to do M.A. in Economics and I need some help."

"No problem," I said. "You know my friend Shyam Sundar Kapur. He has secured first division marks in M.A. Economics and has joined a local college as a lecturer in the subject. I shall request him to help you."

"All right."

Shyam started helping her. He was also preparing for the I.A.S. examination.

Sometime during this period, the Dogri-Kashmiri Unit was transferred to the Internal News Services Division and posts of sub-editors for the unit were advertised to be filled through the Federal Public Service Commission. Uncertainty about selection started worrying me. I mentioned my anxiety to R. M. Ray, Secretary of the Federal Public Service Commission, whom I met everyday in my morning walks on the India Gate - Great Place stretch of Kingsway. He said, "Don't worry, come to my office tomorrow morning and we'll do something." When I saw him in his office, he had a letter of appointment, posting me as an assistant in the Commission, ready. I worked in the Commission during the day, keeping the evenings free for All India Radio work for a few days till the interviews for the posts of sub-editors were held. I was selected, along with Harbanslal Chopra and Urdu fiction writer Jagannath Poonchhi. Being the first in selection, I became senior sub-editor Dogri.

Soon, I realised that I had preferred the sub-editor's job to the assistant's job for superficial reasons. Both were non-gazetted posts in the Rs. 250-400 scale with poor prospects and there was hardly any challenge in

the jobs, much less in the sub-editor's job which involved simple translation and reading of news and which now appeared monotonous. There was also no scope for intellectual stimulation and expansion.

A lecturer's job appeared more attractive and suited to my academic background and interest. My friend Shiv Prasad Raina, who had joined the Hindu College as a lecturer in English, took me to Thadani, the Principal of Hindu College. Thadani was impressed with my academic record and offered to take me as a lecturer in English. He added, "We can give you the starting salary of Rs. 150/-per month," and asked, "How much do you get in the all India Radio?"

"Rs. 250 p.m."

"Think it over. We shall be glad to have you."

I thought a change of job would upset my monthly budget. A loss of Rs.100 p.m. was too much and I decided to continue with AIR.

Now that I had completed my studies and had a Central Government job, I could not evade the question of marriage much longer. Earlier, there had been an attempt to get me engaged to a girl from Amritsar. I had gone to Amritsar and met the girl in her father's Lawrence Road bungalow, taken her out for a cinema show and a stroll in the Company Baagh. The girl was a school dropout, very shallow, with no intellectual calibre and her interests appeared to be limited to cinema, food and sex. My friend, Vishwanath, had informed me from Amritsar about her sexual escapades after which the proposal had been dropped. Now I was drawn towards Kitty – we had been together in the same class in the Prince of Wales College, Jammu for four years. She had shown interest in me and I had grown rather fond, very fond of her. Our class fellows made me feel that we would make a

good couple. I had been meeting her occasionally and had found her rather ambivalent – sometimes warm and informal, sometimes cold and formal. Once I had made bold to propose marriage, but she had been evasive, undecided and noncommittal. Sometimes she said she did not want to get married at all, sometimes she brought up her burden of responsibilities like marriage of two younger sisters and giving relief to her mother who was working as a teacher. Sometimes she said that she would marry anyone her parents chose and sometimes she said she would leave everything to destiny, she would go with whomsoever she was destined to marry. I felt that with some more pressure from me, she might agree to marry me. There were a couple of proposals from Jammu, including one from Triloki Nathji, to which I had not reacted. He had been kind to me and I had remained in touch with him through correspondence. In one of his letters from DAV College, Ambala, he said, "I want you to be a lifelong friend of mine and I say this after a long contact with you. A good soul is a rare find and I won't like to lose you. I hope you recite Ram Naam daily. That is the key to life and its secrets."

In April 1949, I took ten days' leave and went to Jammu – by train up to Amritsar and by bus from Amritsar to Pathankot and from Pathankot, the rail head, to Jammu. During my stay at Jammu, I participated in programmes of the Dogri Samstha, met Dogri writers and some old friends. Pt. Sansar Chand showed me his paintings in his studio. I also presided over a Dogri Kavi Sammelan. One day I visited my old alma mater and was happy to note in the Roll of Honour hung at the entrance to the College Hall that my record of marks obtained in the F.A. and B.A. stood unbeaten. I also met Kitty's friends – Leela Rampal, Susheela Chaddha,

Krishna Sant and Vidya Ganju. They said, "Now you and Kitty should get married. We know she loves you." I met Kitty's father who was very cordial in his welcome. On return to Delhi, I went to see her one evening. We sat on the grassy lawn in front of her residence in the Chummeries and I told her about my visit to Jammu and whom all I had met, her friends and father.

I don't know for how long we kept sitting face to face, talking, not noticing when daylight yielded to dusk, when the streetlights on the road outside came up, who passed by. Then I asked her point blank, "What do you say?"

"Whatever is in my destiny. I can't say anything. As I told you earlier, I am not interested in marriage. But if you qualify for the I.A.S., I'll give you a gold medal. I shall start laying aside money for it."

I felt depressed. Depression and ennui continued to lie heavy on my mind for the next two months of May and June. Marriage appeared a mirage to me. What was there in it? Why should I marry at all? Just around that time my friend S. T. Yen married Miss Shih who had come from Hong Kong only a few weeks earlier to join the Chinese Unit of All India Radio. They both appeared so happy, so fulfilled!

On 29th July 1949, came the results of the IAS examination. My name was not there in the list of successful candidates. Names of Prashant Mitra and Shyam Sundar Kapur were there, lower down – both of them were admitted to Indian Revenue Service (Income Tax). I had fared very well in the written papers but had fallen short by five marks in viva voce – 100 marks against a minimum of 105 out of 300 required and qualification in viva voce those days was a must. I went to see Kitty at her residence. I saw her sitting with Shyam Sundar Kapur, laughing hilariously. I had never found

her so hilarious whenever I was with her. Shyam and I came out together, when Shyam said, "She is evincing great interest in me. What do you think?"

"Maybe she's in love with you. I have loved her very dearly," I replied.

"But I don't think she has any love for you."

I was disenchanted, disillusioned, overwhelmed by a feeling of failure – failure on two fronts – both crucial in life at that stage – in the examination, for the first time in any examination and in love, my first love. But I collected myself. I said to myself, "Look at Nature! What harmony! What balance! What beauty! Look within – cultivate your inner self. Doesn't matter if your love for Kitty has not fructified, it has kept you on a straight path, it did not let you go astray." There were so many opportunities, so many occasions to get involved. There was Ma Chie, the Burmese lively lass, ex-wife of an I.C.S. officer, a little older, but still full of juice of life, who often quizzed me, taunted me, "Mr. Handsome, you are twenty and have not slept with a girl?" Sometimes she invited me to dinner – she was in a two room flat with a kitchenette – and served fish-pickle, a delicacy for her but revolting to my vegetarian taste. Sometimes she threw apples to me, which I caught, smiled and put her off. On the other side of the high wooden trellis between our B block and the opposite block of girls' hostel, there were three or four girls who had shown interest in me; one of them had knit a sweater for me and thrown it to me over the trellis. I thought I must look for reasons of my failure within myself – perhaps my cold, reserved, detached, matter-of-fact nature, particularly in dealing with members of the opposite sex, serious demeanour, lack of passion in expression, a sort of *vairagya*. Now I started spending more time in the open, sitting at India Gate for hours,

looking at the sinking sun, the moon, the stars in the evenings, the rising sun and pearls of dew spread on grassy lawns, flitting and chirping birds in the morning, passing girls. I stopped seeing Kitty. Human beings appeared so insignificant before Nature and Nature's grandeur and harmony. Sometimes I thought of Kitty – what sort of a girl? Has no confidence in herself, no trust in others, can't make up her mind. I remained entangled and ensnared between the "yes" of her eyes and the "no" of her words, for nothing. Sometimes I thought what is there in worldly affairs. Peace, contentment, happiness lie within. Turning away from the world of human beings, look at Nature outside and the Self inside. I wrote to professor Ishwar Sharma, in Jammu, "*I am trying to steer clear of matrimonial rocks and love and flirt whirlpools.*" One day I had an argument with Tariq, Sheikh Abdulla's favourite implant in the Dogri-Kashmiri Unit – his talk smelt of hatred for Dogras. I felt like leaving my job and going to some village to do social service.

In the first week of August, Kitty telephoned from her office, "Please come over after reading the news."

I went. She said, "The next I.A.S. examination is taking place in September. There is also a test for some United Nations Organisation post. I have brought admission forms for both. Please fill them in and give them to me in my office tomorrow. I shall type them out for you."

"I do not feel like sitting for any examination."

"No, no, you must try. I want you to sit for both the examinations."

I filled in the forms, got them typed and submitted them with the required fees. And started the preparations half-heartedly. One day, Bhandari, the Stationmaster of New Delhi Railway Station introduced me to one Rallan,

Permanent Way Inspector of the Northern Railways, posted at Patiala. Rallan was looking for a suitable match for his elder daughter. On Bhandari's insistence, I met Rallan, his wife and their daughter Indira over tea in the "York" restaurant. I found Indira sober, graceful and charming with a slightly darkish complexion but very expressive eyes. Her parents allowed her to converse with me freely and I found her responses intelligent. Her first letter from Patiala was exciting. She wrote: "*My dear Mr. Shivaji, I feel that on meeting you I've lost a precious part of my body. Why were you so good and nice to me? Do you like me? If so for what reasons?*" and enclosed with the letter a typed sheet on the "Nature of True Love", perhaps copied from somewhere. It ran like this: "Love does not mean physical beauty and poetic passion, two hearts in stardust beating as one, the chase, the capture and the surrender ... Love and physical embrace become almost synonymous in young minds ... Love is the passionate and abiding desire on the part of two people to produce together conditions under which each can be and spontaneously express his/her real Self, to produce together an intellectual soil and an emotional climate in which each can flourish, far superior to what either could achieve alone ... Love is self-realisation together in US, which includes the right of each partner to pursue individual interests." I wrote back to her that my own views about Love accorded with the sentiments expressed in the note. Between 4th September and 6th October 1949, I received eight letters from her and wrote back as many – full of love and understanding. Her mode of addressing me changed from "Mr. Shivaji" to "Prince Charming" to "My dearest". She found my letters thrilling and called me "You silent dacoit" and in one letter, "I pray to God to bless me with the power to make you a man of my pride and happiness" and in another "You are a loving

soul, working hard for your Princess Charming and I am waiting for the sweet loving hand to slap me." She praised my language and expression and wrote that she found me highly virtuous, well behaved, possessing high character, with respect for the feminine sex. Her letters inspired me to work hard for the IAS examination. I had watched the cricket match between India and West Indies in the Ferozshah Kotla ground. Worrel's team was invited to play a match at Patiala and I was invited by Indira's father to visit Patiala to see the match. I took two days' leave and went to Patiala, stayed with the Rallans in their large house, enjoyed their lavish hospitality and was touched by the warmth of their reception. After I returned to Delhi, Mrs. Rallan came to Delhi and took my horoscope. I sent with her some books for Indira, *Gardener*, *Lover's Gift*, *Jeevan Sandesh* and my article published in the Govt. College magazine *The Ravi*. She wrote back thanking me for the books and saying that a panditji had seen my horoscope and was going to prepare her horoscope and if the two horoscopes tallied, there would be a betrothal ceremony and she was quite excited at the prospect.

One day Kitty telephoned and I went to see her. She looked sad and dejected. She said, "Congratulations. I hear you have been betrothed."

"Not yet, but I am going to be engaged shortly." And I told her about Indira.

She said, "Play of destiny! You pressed me but I couldn't make up my mind. My father liked you; he could've fixed it up. One day my Guruji had asked me and I'd told her about you and also about Shyam Sundar but she did not say anything. I would've abided by her decision."

What could I say? I sat with her for some time and came away.

My going ahead with the Patiala girl turned out to be ill starred. Mr. Bhandari informed me that our horoscopes were not favourably matched. Indira's letters also stopped coming. I felt as though the flow of love and inspiration generated by Indira had suddenly dried up.

Now I found the work in AIR. rather monotonous and I performed it listlessly. I wanted some challenging work which could absorb me fully, which could open new possibilities, new vistas of experience. I thought of journalism, but it was difficult to get in. There was no institute of training in journalism in Delhi at that time and there were only three English papers – *The Statesman* and *The Hindustan Times* from Connaught Circus in New Delhi and *The Indian News Chronicle* from Mori Gate in old Delhi. To get apprenticeship in any of them without recommendation was out of the question. I got a letter of recommendation from my old Principal Girdharilal Gupta who was staying in Karol Bagh and saw Lala Desh Bandhu Gupta, a prominent figure in Delhi. He gave me a letter for Mr. Sinha, the editor of *The Indian News Chronicle*. The daily paper had Mr. Shyam Lal, who later became the editor of the *Times of India* and wrote very readable articles on "Life and Letters" as the Assistant Editor. I was taken as apprentice. Everyday I took the Pullman bus for Kashmiri Gate at the Parliament Street Bus Stop, walked from Kashmiri Gate bus stop to Kashmiri Gate, turned to Nicholson Road, parallel to the Old City Wall, to reach the Paper's offices, spent two or three hours in the Newspaper office, got back to Kashmiri gate, took the bus to Connaught Place and walked from there to Western House. To avoid inconvenience to my hosts S.T. Yen and Shih, I took a room on rent in Lodi Road – B16/451 and brought my

parents from Jammu. Commuting between Parliament Street, Mori Gate and Lodi Road was exhausting but I continued, with the exertions involved.

By now I had pushed back memories of hard but fruitful and pleasant days of College and of sweet bitter experience of the preceding two and a half years. But Kitty and Indira kept nagging my consciousness off and on – one beautiful and serious but stuck on the wheel of indecision and total trust in destiny, the other sophisticated, intelligent and intellectually vibrant who responded enthusiastically to my love with warmth and understanding, albeit for barely two months, inspired me to put in hard work for the IAS examination. Both experiences had been worthwhile. I could look at them dispassionately with a certain detachment and felt that Love was indeed the distilled essence of all that was wonderful and alive in the human soul and body.

On 18th February 1950, I was 25 and my resolve not to marry till I reached that age had been fulfilled. I could not put my mother off any longer – she wanted to have a *bahu*, a daughter-in-law, at the earliest. I too was now ready for marriage. In early March I inserted a simple matrimonial advertisement in *The Hindustan Times*. Around that time, in March itself, the result of IAS examination was out – my name was there among the successful candidates. On 26th January 1950, with the adoption of India's New Constitution, the country had become a Republic and the name of the Federal Public Service Commission had been changed to Union Public Service Commission, which issued the "Table of Results of the Combined Competitive Examination" and "Indian Police Service" held in Sep-Oct, 1949. The list showed that Romesh Bhandari, who had indicated his preference for only two services – Indian Administrative Service and Indian Foreign Service, got very poor marks in some

subjects – 68 out of 150 in English essay paper, 59/150 in General English, 72/150 in General Knowledge, 38/200 in Applied Mathematics, but 275/300 in viva voce (the highest by any candidate) and seventh position for IAS and IFS. He was allotted to Indian Foreign Service. I had received100/150 in English Essay, 86/150 in General English, 96/150 in General Knowledge, 117/200 in English literature, 92/200 in Indian History and 120/200 in British History and 145 in viva voce and eighteenth position for IAS and IFS and number one in the list of those qualified for IPS (Indian Police Service) in the list for different native States. Triloki Nath Chaturvedi had been placed at 39th position, on the margin for available vacancies for IAS. My friend Kumar Lalit was 41st in the list, outside the list of vacancies for the IAS/IFS and was allotted Indian Audit and Accounts Service. I was told some years later that Triloki Nath Chaturvedi got into the Indian Administrative Service because someone qualified for IAS was left out. Surendranath, at 47th position for Indian Administrative Service was at No.2 for the Indian Police Service list for Delhi and Punjab combined and was allotted to Indian Police Service. I was surprised at my success. I had not been inclined to go through preparations for the examination a second time. It was Kitty first and Indira later who had goaded me to sit for the examination and work hard for it. It was just my good luck or the good wishes of these two girls that had worked. Or perhaps it was the benediction of the Divine, one of whose various forms was manifested as Vaishno Devi of the three-peaked hill in Jammu and whose blessings I had invoked at the time of the examination.

I received three letters from Indira in March and April, addressing me as "My dear Bhaiya", "My dearest Bhaiya" and "My dearest" progressively. In the first letter

she said she had no peace of mind and did not mean any offence and that her nasty behaviour was purposely posed to make it easier for me to take her out of my memories, at the expense of her own feelings. In her second letter she said she had been silly and her feelings had not changed, that it was a curse to be a girl – no independence, no views, a slavish life, that she appreciated and bowed down to my pure love for her, that her life had become empty and offered to find a girl for me – a sister's privilege and ending with "Yours as before". In the last letter she said she was happy to learn about my success in the IAS and thanked the Almighty and wished we were together to thank the Almighty, felt proud of me and that her love for me had worked, that she was ready to rebuild what according to me she had shattered, that I could command her and she would consider herself lucky, that she did not care for horoscope but her Mummy and I did.

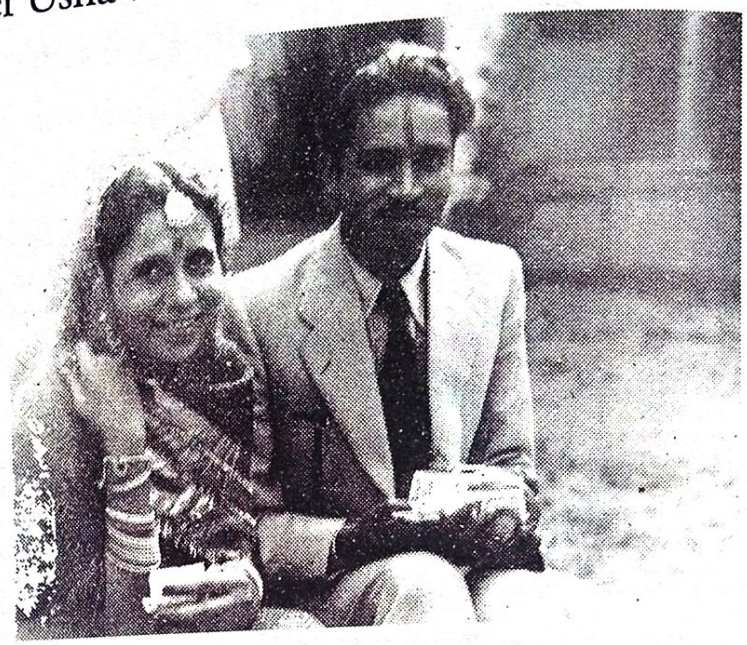
Around this time, Kitty called at my place with her elder sister. She showed not just willingness but keenness to get married to me.

The last six months had given me some distance, psychologically, to look at things more clearly, dispassionately. I thought that after what had transpired, I could not go back to either Kitty or Indira. Now Kitty's indecisiveness, calculating attitude, with no mind of her own and Indira's long nose and darkish complexion appeared to bother me. Perhaps their characteristics had something to do with their considerations.

I stopped going to the office of *The Indian News Chronicle* and attended to about a hundred proposals received in response to my matrimonial advertisement. In consultation with my mother I shortlisted two of them – one from Mathura and the other from Benares –two ancient cities and places of pilgrimage, one

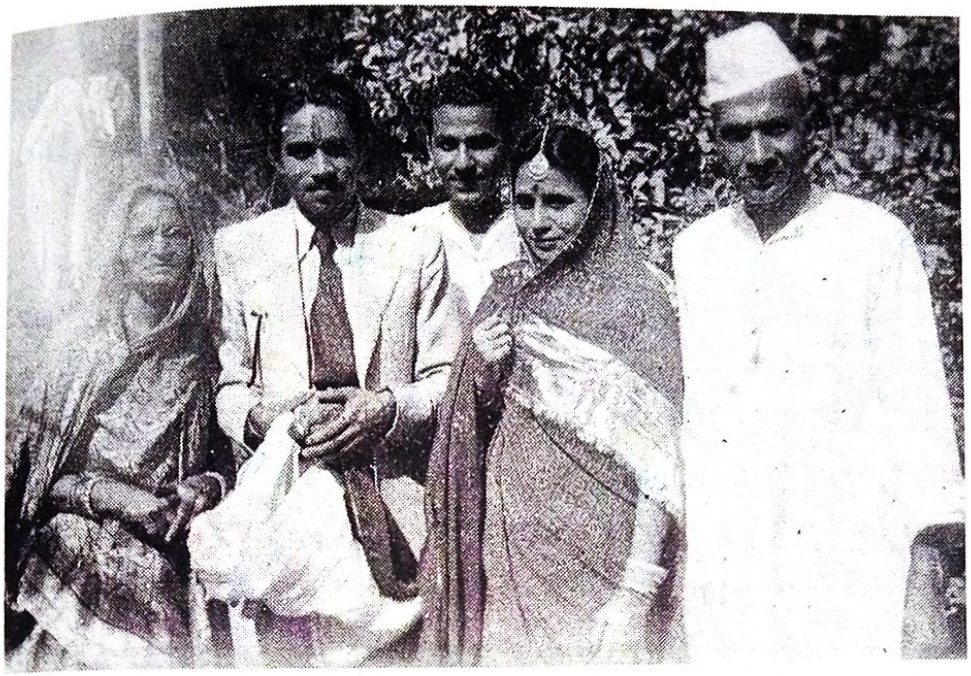
connected with Krishna and the other connected with Shiva. Mathura was near and Pandit Govind Ram Pathak, a retired officer of the U. P. Educational Service had written, "I have two daughters of marriageable age, both well educated. You are invited to come and meet them." I took a day off from All India Radio and boarded an early morning bus for Mathura. I had no difficulty in locating Randhir Bhawan close to the Mathura Museum in Dampier Nagar. Pandit Govind Ram Pathak welcomed me. We sat in the large hall of the two-storeyed *kothi*. Soon two young ladies entered – one slim, straight after her bath, in a simple cotton sari, with water drops glistening on her loosened hair, her face glowing with radiance, eyes alert with a challenging look, the other plump and subdued. They were introduced as Lakshmi and Usha respectively. I instantly felt inclined towards Lakshmi who engaged me in conversation. She appeared very open, radical and unorthodox in her views, intellectually stimulating, modern in outlook, distrustful of traditional values and practices and questioning everything. She was a graduate of Allahabad University, had done her Masters in English literature from Jodhpur and was teaching English in the local Kishori Raman College. She loved English prose while I loved English poetry. We had lunch together. I rested for some time and after tea, Pathakji took me to the famous Dwarkadish temple and the Yamuna *ghats* – where the evening *aarati* with *divas*, lamps floating on the river waters presented an other-worldly sight and the atmosphere surcharged with the spirit of devotion. After dinner, Lakshmi took me to her room on the first floor – everything tastefully arranged, in perfect order. We kept talking for quite some time, my attraction for her growing.

Early next morning, Pathakji saw me off at the Mathura Railway Station. From Delhi I wrote to both Pathakji and Lakshmi and got favourable replies. On 26th April, Pathakji came to our place with his younger daughter Usha with *shagun* and an engagement ring and



Lakshmi & Shivnath

12th May was fixed as the date for marriage. On 29th April, Lakshmi came to Delhi to buy some jewellery and saris and we met each other again. I had made it clear to Pathakji that I would not accept any dowry and our marriage party from Delhi would consist of only ten persons including my father, artist Pt. Sansar Chandji, my Chinese friends S. T. Yens, Kashmiri newsreader Raghunath Raina and Bhandari, the Stationmaster of New Delhi Railway Station who made arrangements for our railway journey to Mathura and back. On 12th May Lakshmi and I were married at Randhir Bhawan in a simplified, shortened ceremony of Vedic rites. Her eldest brother, who was a professor in the National Defence Academy at Clement Town in Dehradun, the one next to him and elder to her, who was with Transworld Airways at Cairo, a cousin who was an actor in films in Bombay, an uncle – a Central Bank Manager in Gwalior – and his wife, another uncle



With Pathakji & family

– an advocate in Bundi – and his wife, relations from Agra, Lucknow and Jalgaon in Maharashtra were all there. Lakshmi's biggest regret was that her dearest younger brother Satyendra Dev Pathak, who was doing duty on a ship on the high seas, could not come. My friend Shyam Sundar Kapur was also married on 12th May 1950, not with Kitty but with the daughter of some Deputy Secretary from Delhi. On 14th May, we had a simple reception in the lawn in front of our residence which my colleagues in AIR, friends from Western House, my old Principal Girdharilal Gupta, Lakshmi's friend Dr. Kaumudi and Shyam Sundar Kapur and his wife attended. I took a week's leave from work and we went to Dehradun and Mussoorie for our honeymoon.

I have a vague remembrance of having attended the IAS Academy in Metcalf House, Delhi and listening to some lectures by eminent persons including one by the then Chief Justice of India. One day I was called by Mr. Subanna, a Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs in the Central Secretariat. He said, "I have bad news for you. We have to pull you out of the Indian

Administrative Service because there is a technical hitch in your allotment to the Indian Administrative Service. We had written to the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, the state of your domicile, to indicate the State Government's willingness to participate in the All India Services scheme. They have not agreed to join the Union of India for All India Services i.e. the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Police Service. Your next preference is the Indian Postal Service Class I. We can give you an option to indicate revised preference for any other Class I service. If we do not hear from you, we shall issue orders allotting you to the Indian Postal Service." I hardly knew anything about other services. I did not write to the Home Ministry for revision of my preference.

July was a very wet month and Lakshmi was away at Mathura. On the 10th I cycled down to Okhla Barrage in pouring rain and on the 14th I wrote to her:

> *"I do miss you but I do not feel lonely. I stay out under the star-spangled sky, walk alone under the dark shadows of trees and I feel the presence of the Divine and share my problems and worries and anxieties with the Divine and repeat the couplet of the Urdu poet Iqbal:*
>
> Too hai muheet-e-bekaraan, main hoon zara si aab-e-ju
>
> Ya mujhe hum kinaar kar, ya mujhe bekinar kar
>
> *(You are the limitless ocean, I am only a slender stream. Either make me one with you or make me limitless.)*

I realise the immensity of space and time – stars, planets, bigger than the moon, the earth and the sun, time spread over centuries gone by and centuries to come, civilisations lost in sands, after attaining grandeur. I experience all this in me. I also realise the insignificance of man and his efforts and I wish to fly to be among the stars and carry you also along."

On the 16th I went to Mathura to see her. As I was returning by bus, Dwarka Nath Kachru, Pandit Nehru's Private Secretary was taking his friend Dr. Kaumudi to Mathura in his car to leave her there with Lakshmi. He returned to Delhi the same evening. The next morning he was no more – killed in an air accident between Delhi and Srinagar. What had passed with me appeared so insignificant compared with what had passed with Kachru and his family and friend Kaumudi. I recalled what Pt. Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, had said in his convocation address in Benares Hindu University, that all the citizens of India must have equal rights and equal opportunities – if Kachru had been alive, Kaumudi could mention my case to him for the attention of the Prime Minister. Lakshmi was very sportive and supportive; she wrote to me: *"Don't worry. What does it matter if you haven't got into Indian Administrative Service?"*

In the first week of November, I received a communication from the office of the Director General of Posts and Telegraphs. It informed me that I had been selected by the Government of India for appointment to the Indian Postal Service Class I and posted to U. P. Circle and that I should intimate if I accept the offer.

The next day I walked up to the North Block in Central Secretariat and called on Krishna Prasad, I.C.S.,

the then Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs. He sat in a large high ceilinged room with a big table in front. He got up from his seat when I was ushered in by a liveried peon and shook hands with me.

I informed him that I had come to report that I accepted the offer of appointment to the Indian Postal Service. He enquired about my academic record, where all I had studied, my experience in the All India Radio, my position in the competition for IAS, what subjects I had offered and so on. He listened attentively to what I told him. He said:

"You should not mind that you did not get into Indian Administrative Service. Indian Postal Service is a good service with a global network, the largest in the world and for a service-oriented person, it can provide immense satisfaction."

"Sir."

"When are you going to join?"

"Maybe sometime next week."

"Welcome. I wish you good luck." He stood up and I took leave.

7

I relinquished charge of the post of Senior Sub-editor in the News Service Division of All India Radio on the afternoon of November 21, 1950, bade goodbye to Broadcasting House and friends there and took the evening train to Lucknow along with my wife so that I could join there in the forenoon of 22nd and avoid break in service under the Central Government. Next morning, at Charbaugh Railway Station, Lucknow, we were received by my wife's uncle Rama Krishna Mausaji and his Man Friday Nihore, who escorted us in cycle rickshaws to Mausaji's two-and-a-half storeyed old house in a narrow alley opposite the Arya Samaj Mandir, Ganeshganj. I got ready in time to reach the office of the Post Master General to report in the forenoon of November 22, 1950. I filled in the joining charge report with the help of Narsingh Dass, Staff Assistant in the PMG's office – an amiable, easygoing, helpful, paan-chewing man, in the presence of the Office Superintendent – a Spartan looking Bengali Babu. This

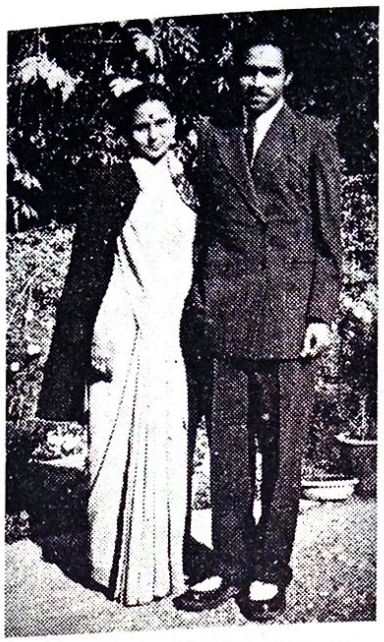
was followed by calls on the PMG – Major PKS Chari, two Directors of Postal Services, a Laurel and Hardy sort of duo, a tall and lean Philatelist, Chandra and a short and squat white turbaned sardar Harbans Singh and the Director of Telegraphs, KV Pai, a genial MRA enthusiast, in whose room we were always welcome for a chat and a cup of coffee. Unlike Krishna Prasad, the Director-General of P&T, who exuded warmth and enthusiasm, Major Chari looked sedate, glum and a little cold and withdrawn.

Ganeshganj was located in the heart of the old city of Lucknow, somewhat midway between the Railway Station and Aminabad, the famous market place and

one could walk to these places and to Kaiserbag and Rambagh and from there to Hazratganj, the posh market which had two cinema halls – the new "Mayfair" and the old "Capital" at two ends of the bazaar. I was impressed by the magnificent buildings of Lucknow – those of the Nawab era like Chhattarmanzil on the bank of the river Gomati, the Lucknow University, Imambaras, La Martinier School and new buildings like Council House, Railway Station and two postal buildings – the office of the PMG at one end of

Hazratganj and the GPO at the other end, one close to "Mayfair" and the other almost opposite "Capital". After a few days stay at Ganeshganj, we shifted to rented accommodation, a self-contained wing of a bungalow on Faizabad Road situated along the railway tracks, owned and lived in by a tall, retired Bengali Professor. It took us several days and even more nights to get used to the hurtling and hooting trains at all sorts of odd hours. After a few months, I got a portion of 11 Jopling Road, a two storeyed bungalow belonging to one JP Srivastava, a former member of the Viceroy's Executive Council which was shared by four officers and had a beautiful well-maintained lawn in front and a profusion of flowers and plants looked after by two gardeners who bagged awards for the best flowers in flower shows and for whose salaries we had to pay extra amounts. It had some fruit trees in the backyard, which bore the sweetest papayas and the sourest *karaundas*. The location was very convenient. I went for my walks to the Gomati riverside or to the Botanical Garden on Outram Road or to the Zoological Park behind Narahi where one could pick up fresh vegetables. We went to the "Mayfair" and the "Capital" sometimes. The more recent Halwasiya Market and Hazratganj provided excellent shopping. For fruits and Choudhury sweets, we went to Aminabad market.

Our on-the-job training proceeded merrily, leisurely. We had total freedom to come and go. We were issued copies of P&T Manuals, about nine or ten of them with bundles of correction slips, which had to be pasted in relevant places in the Volumes. We also had access to the files of DG's General Circulars and DG's Post Office Circulars and what were known as Extant Orders. The first year consisted of attachments for familiarization, learning and understudy – four



months with the Postmaster GPO (General Post Office), three months with the Superintendent of Post Offices, three months with the Superintendent of Railway Mail Services and sometime in the PMG's office, also called Circle Office. The Postmaster Lucknow GPO, a well-groomed Muslim gentleman with clipped *khichri* beard in black *sherwani* was a picture of *Lakhnavi* grace, courtesy and good manners and was always helpful in his own dignified quiet way. We saw the working of different branches – mail branch, delivery branch, registration and parcel branches, counter operations in money order, savings bank branches and familiarized ourselves with numerous forms and procedures and read up the Volumes. The Superintendent of Post Office, N. Chidambaram, struck me as a very conscientious and thorough officer, who learnt Urdu on posting to Lucknow to be able to read himself the Branch office daily accounts (many Branch-Postmasters rendered their returns and accounts in Urdu only). The Superintendent RMS, "O" Division, Lucknow, was a paan-chewing, bearded Khan Bahadur Mohammed Hanif from Bhadoi near Banaras who told us stories of the importance of being a Superintendent RMS during British Raj when Railways were run by companies and the Superintendent

was an Imperial Officer, who could hold up a mail train for mails or on the pretext of mails. He had started his career in the Department as a Sorter and had risen up to the rank of Inspector. He had done some good work in a train accident, got a promotion and the title of Khan Bahadur. After attachments for understudy of Divisional charges, came assignments of holding independent charges – as Sub-Postmaster of a delivery post office for two weeks, of a postal sub-division for three months and of a small head post office for three months. For me Dilkusha Sub Post Office in the Cantonment in Lucknow itself was quite convenient. But working as Inspector of Post Offices in Malihabad was extremely tough. Malihabad was known for the Urdu poet Josh Malihabadi and for its delicious Dasehri mangoes. But during my term of tenure, November-December 1951 to February-March 1952, we saw neither Josh, nor any mangoes. I had to travel almost daily from Lucknow to Malihabad and back by train with my cycle in the brake van and traverse tedious and tiring distances partly on cycle and partly on foot, through dusty, uneven tracks and through fields to reach villages like Kasmandi Khurd three to five miles away, for inspection of village post offices. Confirmation examination was also due in March and I had to prepare for it. I completed my quota of inspections and also cleared the examination in the first attempt itself. As a result of the dual exertion, I suffered nervous breakdown and had to go to the Civil Surgeon Lucknow, Dr. Dixit, for a course of Vitamin B injections.

My next posting was as Postmaster, Almora Head Post Office. It afforded me the much needed relief and relaxation in salubrious environment. I joined there on March 22, 1952 with my wife and four months' old

son. The regular Head Postmaster, a Kumauni, who had taken three months' leave to make room for me, accommodated us in a portion of the Postmaster's quarters next to the Post Office, while he and his family continued to occupy the rest of it. I instantly fell in love with Almora – a quiet, peaceful, beautiful town with a healthy climate and excellent environment, nestling cosily among rugged crags around, with humble houses and a homely bazaar, a town that attracted the Indian dancer Uday Shankar to set up his Academy of Dance, Drama and Music with Ravi Shankar and Zohra Sehgal and other artists, that drew to itself intellectuals and seekers and savants. I found the post office in its newly constructed building, very well organized; it had a vast jurisdiction and a number of sub offices and branch offices in account spread over long distances extending up to Pithoragarh, Dharachula and Bageshwar.

I have very pleasant memories of my three-month tenure as Postmaster, Almora Head Post Office, partly because of the healthy ambience and bracing climate of the place and partly because of the people, both postal and non-postal, with whom I had the opportunity to interact during that short period. Almora was like an oasis after the gruelling and strenuous three months as Inspector of Post Offices, Malihabad. Relaxed morning walk time was the time to take in the views of Nature. There were lovely views, from the Circuit House, from below the Church, from below the Vivekananda Laboratory, from the Almora Court wherefrom snow-clad Nandadevi could be seen on a clear day. The view from the Mall Road, especially from the Brighton-end was breathtaking. The sky would sometimes get filled with hordes of clouds, turn slaty, merge with the hills which could be distinguished only by their thicker grey

colour and then it would start raining, with a darkening pall of gloom enveloping earth and sky and it would get chilly, biting cold.

Office work was light and interesting and the staff was nice, polite and helpful. I learnt a lot about Post Office operations from the postal staff.

I learnt even more about life and literature and philosophy from the non-postal people, remarkable people in themselves who opened new vistas before me. I met some of them in the Post Office and some at their or my residence. Quite early in April, I met E.B. Steiner, a rugged, well-built, tall American missionary who had been in India since 1913, had visited Tibet three or four times and had been working among the *bhotias* of Dharachula and its neighbourhood. He came to the Post Office on foot and pony back at regular intervals to collect his mail personally. Well past sixty, he was very energetic. He was dead opposed to communism. In the very first meeting he said, "China has gone into darkness, Tibet is going dark and Russia is already dark." One evening, I called on Boshi Sen and his American wife, daughter of a well-known American writer and had tea with them. I saw the carefully tended and labelled plants of Vivekananda Laboratory, learnt a lot about Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose's work on plant life and exchanged views on American literature.

Later, in the month of May, I had a French visitor – *khaki* bush-shirt patched at the shoulder, blue shorts, bare-footed, bare-headed. He had come to the Post Office to post a letter to his *guruji*. Sorely fed up with Indian food – *dal* and cooked, spiced vegetables, he pined for fresh fruits, raw vegetables and unboiled milk. He had refused to enlist in the Second World War and had been put behind bars. He said that if he went back to France, he would be dubbed a communist. I invited him

for breakfast at my residence. He came and sat on the floor and we shared our breakfast. He was mighty pleased when my wife gave him an orange.

On the morning of 4th May, I trekked up to "Himavati", the residence of Lizelle Raymond, a Swiss lady who had come to Almora to work on the interpretation of Hindu religion and philosophy for the West. A parcel addressed to her, damaged in transit, had been received in the Post Office and she had been given a notice to come and take delivery of it in the presence of the Postmaster. She had written back that she could not come because it meant wasting half-a-day, she had weak legs, too much work and nobody to help. I decided to go myself. It was quite a climb – past the Hallette Reservoir, beyond Balchoti, above Khulve Estate. I was still at the gate when she came out and greeted me warmly. She looked stunningly beautiful in a white sari and white *khadi* blouse. She led me to the drawing room – neat and tastefully furnished with racks stacked with books.

"Such a beautiful and rich library!" I said.

"It's at your disposal. I'm told you're fond of reading."

Then she took me to a smaller room which had a bed covered with white fur on which crouched a cat and a kitten. Pointing to them she said, "Living alone like this, one has to have a pet and she is so cute and nice!" She fondled the cat lovingly and added, "And then she also catches snakes." The sealed bag containing the parcel kept in a corner of the room by the postman was cut open. The contents of the parcel were taken out and found all right. There were some pictures and photo prints of Bagheshwar fair, Kausani views and Mayawati Ashram, women shopping. There were two photo prints of Shri

Anirvan, a bearded saintly face. She praised him a lot. "You approach him on any point and he has an answer. He is a great help to me in my work and he knows French."

While she brought me a cup of coffee, I looked around. There was a beautiful picture of lotuses on the wall and pictures of Anirvan, Maharshi Ramana and herself on the table.

In the veranda there was a typewriter on a table and a manuscript. She was also writing on Sharada Ma – a biography. "I know so little, just a particle of your great philosophy," she said, "I am only a student trying to know more". Then she told me of her meeting with Ramana Maharshi who said to her, "You have another name and you will go to the Himalayas." There was a reference to Kashmir and she brought four issues of a journal *Kashmir* and lent them to me. She had arthritis, she said, like my wife. "If I go down to Almora, I'm half dead by the time I return."

In May 1952, I visited Earl H. Brewster at his residence "Snow View Estate". We sat in the veranda in the fading light of the expiring day, with dusk thickening and high snow-peaked mountains in front changing colour and talked about the English novelist D.H. Lawrence and Shri Aurobindo, Brewster's sixteen years in Almora with his wife who had passed away, sad plight of the world, Kashmir and Aldous Huxley, Danagopal Mukherjee and Mirtola. I had been a great admirer of D. H. Lawrence having read a number of his novels – the unexpurgated edition of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Two Women*, *Sons and Lovers*, *The Plumed Serpent*. I learnt from Brewster that D.H. Lawrence and his wife Freida had been his and his wife's personal friends and they had stayed together at Capri and in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), that Lawrence had declared that he had always been a

worshipper of Shiva. According to Brewster, Lawrence's writing was inspired by a spiritual message that was more in harmony with Indian conceptions than with those of the West. Brewster said, "You know Shri Aurobindo admired DH Lawrence and in one of his letters had said that Lawrence was a yogi who had missed his way and come into a European body to work out his difficulties." Then he added, "Lawrence was idealistic, with disbelief in the mind which was the great slayer of the real. He was a puritan who held marriage as a sacrament and reverenced life seeing it as the *Lila* of the Divine Spirit."

Brewster was in a nostalgic mood and said, "When I first saw him at our home in Capri in 1921, he looked serene and free from self-consciousness and he seemed to have brought with him the pure, unsullied atmosphere of the outdoor world, of sea and sky and earth. There seemed to be about him the very incense, which the sun brings forth from grass and ferns. He was tall, slender, delicately built, with a fine head and luxuriant brown hair, a beard of a more fiery hue and penetrating pure blue eyes. He was always dressed with perfect taste and his movements were lithe, quick and graceful. We had regular correspondence. Once he wrote to me, "I am convinced that every man needs a Bo tree of some sort in his life. If you find a bit of Bo tree shade in India, in that monastery of the hills or elsewhere, I will probably come along. I want the world from the inside, not from the outside. Give me anything which is from God but nothing any more of the dreariness and mechanism of man. One day I want to go to Benares. That attracts me, the pre-Buddha."

The conversation veered towards Lawrence's most controversial book – *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Brewster told me that, Lawrence was at first hesitant to publish it

but then he thought that by refusing to face and admit such situations and words as the book contained and leaving them in the darkness, they were fouled but by bringing them into the light, a purer, more wholesome state was obtained. Lawrence referred to this book as a novel of the phallic consciousness versus the mental-spiritual consciousness. Lawrence wanted the two things to be reconciled. Reverencing life as a divine manifestation, he could not regard sex as a lewd, unmentionable subject. He endeavoured to lift the subject of sex to the higher, purer plane where it belongs.

It was getting late and I got up. He showed me the statue of the Buddha on the table in his room and paintings hanging on the wall mostly done by his wife and a portrait of her done by him, holding up the light tenderly, lovingly. While seeing me to the gate, he mentioned Aurobindo's great work *The Life Divine* and said that he had found greater satisfaction in that one book than in so many other books of Indian philosophy that he had read. It was a great experience talking to a great painter about a great writer.

A frequent visitor to the Post Office and to our place was Sunyata, a Danish sadhu, who had made Almora his home. He would come for tea and bring something to read and talk about writers and their works which interested me and my wife Lakshmi, both students of literature. Sometimes it would be Shakespeare or Tagore or Lawrence or Huxley or J. Krishnamurti. He lent us one of DH Lawrence's books which had gone out of print. It was about Jesus Christ's resurrection and his healing through touch by a priestess – very lyrical and controversial; it was called *The Man Who Died*. Earlier, it was entitled *The Escaped Cock*. One day, he brought a poem of DH Lawrence on "Silence" and read it out. We felt grateful – he gave us so much

Sunyata

for just a cup of tea. Once he gave us a painting by Brewster – purple snow peaks – a view from Snow View Estate. I decided to see him in his den one day. On a hazy, foggy morning, I trudged up to Heeradungri and going past "Himawati", past the three-mile stone, past the "Snow View Estate", reached Kalimat Estate quite exhausted. Sunyata was at the foot of the hill with his dog – a Tibetan dog – "Wuji" he called it. We walked up to Kasar Devi temple. This temple and the Mahadev Temple above were deserted at this hour but there was a lovely view of snow peaks from there. Then we went to his cottage below the hill, built, he said, stone by stone, with his own hands and had tea together. We became good friends. One day we both went to see Shri Anirvan. A little this side of NT Deval, we espied a beautiful green snake snuggling by the roadside. "A lovely thing!" remarked Sunyata who had a thorn in his foot but walked unmindful of it. Shri Anirvan greeted us and

made me sit in the only chair in the room while he sat on the wooden plank. Sunyata sat down on the floor facing us. For quite sometime, we just kept sitting quietly, wordless, smiling at each other. After some time, Shri Anirvan made some comments which appealed to me, "One must have some hobby. Office work without a hobby becomes a drudgery."

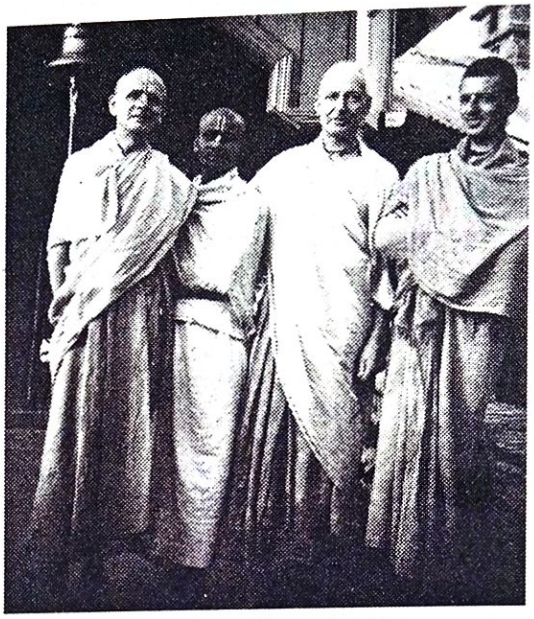
"We can enrich our national languages by translations."

"I believe in silent work without a view to getting it published, without being known and without a desire to be known. Just blooming like a flower."

"One should do *wazu*, washing, before going to sleep. Should sit for a while and awaken another consciousness in oneself – consciousness of the body. Then, do *shavasana* before lying down to sleep." I followed some of these with advantage, like keeping up the hobby of reading and writing, doing translation and working without any desire to be known or recognized.

One day, I visited the local Ramakrishna Mission Ashram, ideally situated at the end of a road overlooking a stream below. I met Swami Ranganathanandji there and was impressed by his erudition and eloquence. Another day I took a tour of temples at Almora, quite a few small ones, of Shiva, Bhairon, Hanuman, Narsingh. Even in the cantonment I saw some small temples in the barracks in what was the Almora Fort. But the temple I liked most was the Khagmarekot temple situated at a place from where one gets lovely views. When I reached there, Akhand Path of Ramayana was going on. The temple priest, a white bearded bent old man, gave me tea and *batashas* and then talked about his visit to Jammu and Kashmir, Kullu and Amarnath and his meeting with Maharaja Pratap Singh and his Wazir Shobha Ram who, according to him, firmly upheld Dharma.

My tenure as Postmaster was going to end shortly when I decided to visit Mirtola, the Ashram of Shri Krishna Prem in the interior hills. There was no bus

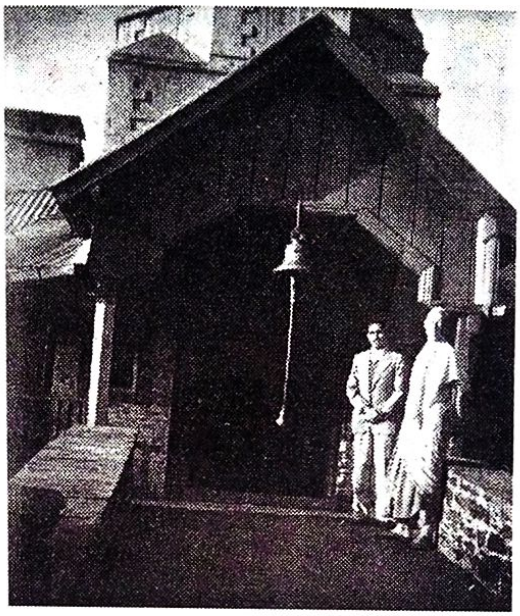


Shri Krishna Prem, Hari Das & Ashish

service to the place then and we had to make the journey on foot. KC Pant, a Post Office Clerk and I left Almora at 6 a.m., halted at Chital, where we saw the temple of Gulla – the God of appeals against injustice. We came across a steep descent to a rivulet called Patarsal. From the wooden plank bridge over it, we saw a solitary oleander tree in front; it was beautiful. We came across the same river again winding and crossed over another wooden bridge. There were beautiful rocks and cacti. We reached Barichina at 9.30 a.m., where we halted for a while in a bug-infested room and had some refreshment. A tough ascent via a shortcut led us to the top. Next, we had to negotiate a slippery narrow passage over shifting black soil to reach Punuwa-naula around 4.30 p.m. We rested here for a while before the final leg of the journey to Mirtola.

It was a memorable evening at Mirtola Ashram, also known as Uttara Vrindavan, founded by Yashoda Ma. Everything about the place was so neat and beautiful

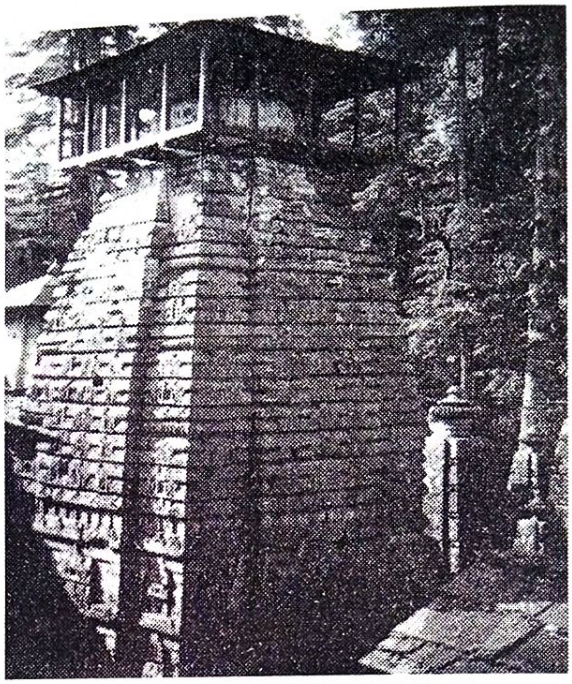
– the Italian white marble statue of Krishna in a tiny temple over the samadhi of Yashoda Ma, the guru of Shri Krishna Prem, the ritualistic *aarati* before the deity



Mirtola Krishna Temple

in which we two joined the four inmates – Krishna Prem (formerly the youngest British Professor Nixon at Lucknow and Benares Universities), Hari Das (formerly Dr. Alexander of Medical College, Lucknow), Madhav Ashish (the newly arrived young aircraft engineer from Australia, who had decided to stay on) and Keshav (a Bengali *brahmachari*) – the simple living style of the inmates, the simple dinner cooked that day by Shri Krishna Prem himself with a piece of jaggery each as dessert, meditation halls and the reading room full of journals from abroad, the garden and the charitable dispensary looked after by Hari Dasji. During dinner Shri Krishna Prem told us in chaste Hindi of the visits of Dilip Kumar Roy when Yashoda Ma was still alive and his singing a soulful Krishna bhajan which made Ma feel the presence of Shri Krishna near her bed. Before retiring he sang the song:

Hari naam bhajo sukh mein dukh mein.
Sab nashwar hai mat maan karo.



Mrityunjaya Temple Jageshwar

Next morning, we started back via Jageshwar where there are numerous time-worn Shiva temples of the 13th century. The temple complex houses one of the twelve *jyotirlingas* in the whole of India. These structures of varying sizes, carved and ridged hundreds of years ago, surrounded by tall towering deodars and the rippling shallow stream flowing close by, had an old world charm and grandeur of their own. Even the tiny houses in the village of Jageshwar with ornamental panels on the façade carved in wood and painted in rustic tones, looked beautiful. The whole place struck us as something out of this world. The Branch Postmaster counted 148 such temples in that area. We got back to Almora the same day, quite tired.

One day we hired a vehicle and took a trip to Kausani where Swami Ranganathanandaji of Ramakrishna Mission accompanied us. We went up from the Post Office to the Dak Bungalow where Gandhiji had stayed and written the preface to some book. There was too much mist and we could not see the snow peaks. We also visited Sarala Behn's Ashram. The path to it commanded a lovely view of the valley

below. It reminded me of Gulmarg in Kashmir. We found Sarala Behn in white *khadi*, very simple, unassuming and full of fun, busy like a bee.

Farewell function for me at the Post Office on the eve of our departure from Almora was an elaborate affair. Next morning, the entire staff of the Post Office gave us a warm, touching send-off. Stopping at Ranikhet for about three hours for lunch and a little sauntering in the local bazaar, we reached Nainital around 5 p.m. The Head Clerk of the Postal Superintendent's office had made arrangements for our stay at the Inspection Quarters – a comfortable and lovely place with beautiful views through the glass panes. In the evening we went down to the lake for a boat ride. The lights of the town reflected in the waters of the lake lent it an other-worldly aura. The next day I called on Dewan Bahadur Daulat Rai, a retired Postmaster-General of U.P. who had settled down in Nainital. With his striking moustaches, breeches and bow-tie, he struck me as a very nice and hospitable man. He turned out to be an old Government College, Lahore alumnus like me. He told me that he enjoyed his retired life and his interests lay in the Club, walking and comparative study of religions.

It had been raining in the night and in the morning on both the days. The sky cleared up in the afternoon and there was a downward rush of tourists. We left Nainital around 5 p.m. and reached Kathgodam in time to catch the train for Lucknow.

After Almora, it was Saharanpur – the P&T Training Centre. I liked the campus – a sprawling, open place set in sylvan setting, the canal nearby, rows of sweet smelling magnolias, purple jacarandas and flaming gulmohars and blooming colourful flowers of the season, the parade of trainees, fields for play and plough spread out. It was nice walking in the midst of nature,

particularly along the canal bank, a quiet place for leisurely imbibing postal knowledge. There were beautiful cloud formations with lovely mixture of colours and contours and they looked marvellous above the long ribbon of road to Ambala passing in front of the Centre gate with trees on both sides converging as the eyes travelled with them almost to a small aperture.

Our batch of direct recruits, the third batch, was the second to have the benefit of six weeks sojourn at Saharanpur as part of the training of probationers. The Centre had been established only about a year earlier on April 01, 1951. Saharanpur Centre was the first training institution for training of postal employees. Training of probationers appeared to be very rudimentary with little input of management skills and it showed shades of hangover of the colonial period during which the District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police were supreme and Postal Divisional Superintendents were supposed to call on them after assuming charge of a division. It consisted of some lectures by the Principal and the Vice-Principal and visits to the City Magistrate, the Superintendent of Police and District Planning Officer to interact with them and learn about district administration.

We were given notebooks bearing the name of the Centre on the cover, priced at eight annas and six pice each. We were told about things to be seen on taking charge of a division, things like Memorandum Book, pending files, list of offices and officials that required close attention, map of the Division, list of returns to be submitted to the PMG's office and received from subordinates, etc. We were advised to open dak received personally and reply to demi-official letters and not allow reminders to be repeated and introduce note-sheet system for fraud and loss cases and pension cases and attend to Inspection Reports without delay. Another

useful advice was about transfers of staff which must be ordered by the Divisional Superintendent personally and never on the advice of the Head Clerk.

My experience in Almora had left a lasting impression on my consciousness and I carried the memories of that experience in the plains. These were kept alive and enlivened by letters from Almora. In July 1952, I got a letter from Sunyata detailing the antics of his dog "Wuji" and the Himalayan atmosphere, Governor KM Munshi's visit to the 'hill of cranks', along with two musings of mystic content quoting Shakespeare's play *King Lear*, Buddhist text Surangama Sutra, Ramana Maharshi and the notion of Self-experiencing. In August, he gave me news about the foreign residents, EH Brewster, Lizelle Raymond and Indian savants, Anirvan and Ma Anandamayi and enclosed two more musings to encourage my mystic leanings – the Buddhist lore, Buddha's silence and his disciple Ananda's incessant questioning and Socratic sense of wonder and Tao, the middle way.

In August, I was back in Lucknow. In the meantime, while I was away from Lucknow, CV Cunningham had replaced Major PKS Chari as the PMG, UP. He looked quite different from Major Chari; while the latter exuded quiet dignity, was reserved, keeping to himself, Mr. Cunningham looked edgy, easily excitable and loved to have people around him. He loved sycophancy, subordinate officers calling on him and showing loyalty to him. He appeared to be threatened by the assertion of political power of the natives. During the few months of waiting for completion of the probationary period and posting, we probationers were attached to different officers in the Circle Office to study files and disposal of cases. While doing attachment with PA Telegraph Traffic, Goswami, I accompanied him to

Benares when he went there to inspect the Central Telegraph Office. On this occasion, I visited Sarnath, the Ganga Ghats and the University and wrote to Shri Krishna Prem in Mirtola about my experience. He was gracious enough to write back:

> *"Dear Shri Shivanathji,*
>
> *A visit to Benares is indeed an unforgettable experience and I never fail to experience the same thrill every time I see the Ganga in spate flowing past and over the ghats. Especially if one stands there alone at night one has a vivid sense of all the ages that have gone past and all the millions of pilgrims who have stood there watching it. I know no city in the world where the sense of the Eternal is so vividly present and that in spite of the fact that there are no really old buildings in Benares. Even a thought of the Ganga at Benares brings the sense of peace and eternity. Hence its purifying power."*

Soon orders posting me as Superintendent, Railway Mail Service "F" Division, with headquarters at Nagpur, were received.

By the time I completed my probationary period, I had learnt quite a few things about the organization, rules and procedures and duties and responsibilities of various functionaries and postal and RMS operations. I had also learnt something about the cadre of Indian Postal Service Class I and some of my colleagues. The cadre consisted of a heterogeneous group of officers: (a) those who had joined the Postal Superintendents' Service Class II and had been taken into Class I, mainly by seniority, to form the nucleus of the cadre, 64 of them,

(b) those who had been accommodated from the postal systems of erstwhile Indian States which had merged with the Union of India, (c) some war service candidates allotted to the service and (d) those recruited direct to the service. A certain number of posts had been fixed in the cadre on its initial constitution and that number had been filled substantively from among the first three categories, the bulk being from among those who had risen from Postal Superintendents' Service Class-II.

8

Railway Mail Service "F" Division had a vast jurisdiction the entire Central Province, Vidarbha and Madhya Bharat, the erstwhile Union of native states of Central India. Its operations extended even beyond the jurisdiction of the Posts and Telegraphs Central Circle with its sections in running trains – to Jhansi and Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh, to Kota in Rajasthan, to Bhusaval in Bombay Circle and Jharsuguda in Orissa Circle. En route lay mail offices at Nagpur, Itarsi, Bhopal, Bina and Gwalior on one axis, Badnera, Amaravati, Akola, Gondia, Raipur and Bilaspur on the other and Jabalpur, Katni and Satna still on another. There were rest houses for the Railway Mail Service staff at places like Wardha where the staff of RMS "M" Division Madras, working in the section in the Grand Trunk Express, took rest, at Jharsuguda where Railway Mail Service staff from Nagpur and those of "N" Division from Calcutta working in the Howrah-Bombay Mail

took rest, at Bhusaval where "F" Division staff from Nagpur working in Howrah-Bombay Mail and staff from Jhansi working in the Punjab Mail and Pathankot Express and staff from "B" Division Bombay took rest. At Nagda, RMS staff of "F" Division and "W" Division Baroda took rest. Nagpur airport mail office at Sonegaon was the central hub of Night Air Mail Service which brought mails from the four metropolitan cities of Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Delhi in Dakota aircrafts sometime after midnight for exchange so that mail posted in these cities and Nagpur till evening hours in the mobile post offices and RMS offices and connecting mails from other places could be airlifted and delivered the very next morning in these cities.

I had a first class railway pass that could take me to any place in the jurisdiction of the Division, a Divisional Office with sixteen to eighteen clerks dealing with different subjects like staff, establishment, sorting orders, buildings, investigations, inspections, stock and stationery, bags, forms and uniforms, complaints and so on, an Assistant Superintendent and a Head Clerk in the office and four Inspectors to assist me in the administration of the Division. Jabbar at Itarsi, S.N. Sukul at Jabalpur and Appadorai and Phadnis at Nagpur, besides two Check Supervisors, M.C. Sharma and Tabarruk Hussain who were required to pay surprise visits to running Sorting Sections. There was a Head Record Office and Sub Record Offices at outstations for checking of work papers of different sections and mail offices and accounts work. The charge of the Division was quite heavy with a staff of around 1200. The Superintendent was the only gazetted officer in the Division with financial, administrative and disciplinary powers and there was an unending flow of files from

the office, even when in camp, in camp bags. Visits, including surprise visits to Nagpur RMS office and Air Port Office and inspections, meetings with the Union representatives and recording of minutes and follow up action, writing Confidential Reports – all involved work. However, I took everything in my stride, even the rattle and shriek of trains, soot of steam engines, fumes of bag sealing wax and the dust and grime of mail bags.

During my two and a half years' tenure, there were two air crashes of Dakotas carrying night air mail bags near Sonegaon airport and I had to supervise, with the help of my Inspectors, retrieval of mail from the wreckage scattered pell mell, some entangled with severed blood-stained limbs of ill fated passengers. There were valuables in insured articles which had to be preserved and disposed of, partly burnt and damaged postal articles which had to be repaired, enclosed in covers and sent forward. Reporters of *Hitavada* and *Nagpur Times*, the two English dailies published from Nagpur, one of whom was Tarun Kumar Bhaduri, the father of film actress, Jaya Bachhan, had to be briefed for their stories. The crashes presented a horrible sight that got imprinted on my mind and continued to haunt and disturb me for days.

I got a chance to officiate as Senior Superintendent of Post Offices, Jabalpur for two months and hold additional charge of Nagpur Postal Division for over a month. Unlike the Railway Mail Service which worked all twenty four hours in the day, including nights, in stationary offices and running trains, Post Offices worked at fixed hours during daytime only. While men and correct and speedy mail sorting were important in the former, accounts, counter services and collection and delivery of mail were important in the latter. I

experienced no problems in managing the charges which, like the Railway Mail Service Division, involved multi-dimensional management functions – personnel, finance, materials, inspections and investigation. Jabalpur Division was spread over three revenue districts, viz. Jabalpur, Mandla and Saugor. Nagpur Division was equally large and in pursuit of an investigation case, two of my Inspectors, one from the RMS and the other from the Nagpur Postal Division and I, had to travel the whole night in a bullock cart, pass through a thick teak forest, cross streams and also a river to reach the post town. The journey gave me a recurring backache.

Meetings with the Union representatives were quite instructive, in all the three Divisions, more so in the Railway Mail Service Division, though sometimes strenuous and exhausting. I found the representatives tenacious, knowledgeable, often reasonable and genuinely interested in advancing the interests of the staff. They offered a point of view different from the official viewpoint reflected in the case files and I could see the problems from both sides and take an independent view, usually in the interest of the staff. They appreciated openness and sincerity. There were demands within the powers of the Divisional Head, demands where the decision could be taken at the level of the Post Master General and also demands which needed to be taken up with the P&T Directorate. If I was convinced of the reasonableness of a particular demand which needed to be taken up at a higher level, I never hesitated to take it up strongly, first in writing and then in a discussion with the concerned officer in the PMG's office. This won me their trust and respect. N.J. Iyer, who later became the Secretary General of the All India RMS Union, was one of my most efficient

clerks in the RMS Divisional Office. He performed the dual roles of an efficient, obedient Divisional Office Clerk and a combative Secretary of the "F" Division Union admirably. I learnt my first lessons of dealing with Staff Unions from him and the President of the Union, Biwalkar, a Selection Grade Sorter. They made a wonderful team; while Biwalkar was suave, soft spoken, reasonable but firm, Iyer was forthright, aggressive, even argumentative and a hard bargainer. Gupta, my Steno-typist, was my conscience-keeper, clean, correct and incorruptible. During my first visit to Allahabad, he helped me in buying a black steel tiffin box for touring officers which had compartments for keeping rations, plates, cups and saucers, spoons, etc. My duties required me to be on tour for ten to twelve days a month. The tiffin box took care of meals – cooked by my orderly Peon Peshwe and later Om Prakash – for the three of us. We always carried our provisions and never depended on anyone at the places of halt.

Despite the heavy official work, I still managed to find time for reading books, writing letters and seeing places of interest. I enjoyed reading Nirad Chaudhari's *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* and *The Life of Ramakrishna* by Romain Rolland in English and Satchidanand Hiranand Vatsyayana Agyeya's novel *Nadi ke Dweep* and Dharam Vir Bharati's novel *Gunaahon ka Devata* in Hindi. I had kept up intellectually stimulating correspondence with my teacher Dr. Siddeshwar Varma who was in Delhi heading the Hindi Section in the Union Ministry of Education, working on terminologies. He had introduced me to P.K. Gode, the Curator of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune, who had been trying to "clothe the very bones of history with the flesh of cultural and sociological facts supplied by literary sources." Dr. Varma had forwarded

to me his paper on the use of cloth for letter writing at King Harsha's court. In reply to my letter to Dr. Gode seeking information on the postal systems in ancient India, he gave me valuable information about news-carrier or *doota* systems of ancient and medieval India and the sources of their details e.g. in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (Maurya times), inscriptions of Jivita Gupta II and Dharmapaladeva (9th century) and *Subhashitaratna Bhandargara* of Vijayanagar empire (16th century). Dr. Varma had also sent me five hundred Hindi terminologies developed in his section and asked for my comments. I am reproducing here some extracts of my long letter to him dated 28th September 1953:

> *"My dear Dr. Saheb,*
>
> *I was at Mandla – 60 miles from Jabalpur – old seat of the Gonds on the 26th to 28th August. On both the evenings, I strolled down to the Narmada, went across the bridge and back and it was very pleasant and soothing, hauntingly reminiscent of those good old days and that good old bridge over the Tawi in Jammu and your philosophic and intellectual expositions there, illuminating and exhilarating talks with a trail of devotees of learning and knowledge behind. It was a wonderful experience.*
>
> *Your emphasis on the establishment of an Academy for Hindi is in the right direction. I remember your proposal for the establishment of a Sanskrit University at Kudh in the Jammu Hills.*
>
> *I have been deeply impressed by your*

reports on Hindi terminologies and the principles enunciated and followed by you. In our present shrinking world, where linguistic and other barriers between nations are being annihilated, it is wise to adopt international terminologies. Our national language should have its roots in the soil, draw its sap from the Sanskrit and Persian traditions and should have its local colour and national character, but at the same time it should not hesitate to take what comes handy, should absorb it and make it its own. This will be consonant with the very spirit of Indian culture – its broadness and its preparedness to take and absorb everything that comes, its power to assimilate and its staying quality.

At the present moment there are two types of people in India forging in different directions – those who look too much to their past and their self and want to weave their web out of their entrails like the spider and others who look too much to the outside world and its tendencies and movements, oblivious and ignorant of the richness of their own heritage. What is required is a thorough and deep knowledge and understanding of our rich past, the present state of affairs (things change from day to day and many things have got interpolated in our life and language) and the international requirements."

In his reply dated 8th October 1953 he wrote:

"My dear Shiv Nathji,

It is a pleasure to go through your very interesting and delightful letter and to read therein a soul imbued through and through with a zest for literature and higher values. That this zest remains intact, in spite of the chilling clutches of routine, is a remarkable phenomenon, which ought to be an inspiration to many young men of your cadre."

I was in touch with Mirtola and Almora through correspondence with Shri Krishna Prem and Sunyata. While the former wrote to me about his trip to Badrinath, Sunyata described in his letter his visit to Delhi to attend Vijayalakshmi Pandit's daughter Rita's wedding at the special request of Jawahar Lal Nehru, the Prime Minister. Wrote Shri Krishna Prem:

"We had a splendid trip, the weather was lovely and the journey as inspiring as ever. Of course we went on foot by direct route from Majhali near Ranikhet which is by far the best thing to do if one really wants to profit by the pilgrimage."

And Sunyata:

"We willy nilly had to descend and suffer civilisation, its fearful noise and heat and terrible ego-fuss. Shri Jawahar Lalji was at his cultured, unsnobbish best ... the President and vice and many ministers seemed to have stiffened somewhat into rigidity – uniformity and fixed smiles, since we knew them simple congresswallahs and prisoners... Jawahar Lal came along to our group of foreign and Himalayan

ambassadors watching the wedding – chatting about his own and seeming to enjoy us. Indira had just returned from her Russian and Scandinavian gallivanting and looked well even with shorn crowning glory (short hair) ... We really enjoyed our trip and five days stay. Only four nights were hot and sleep free, the skin and bone body tossing nakedly under the fan in 80 degrees of moisture... Here we have lovely lovely days and nights, clear, serene and sunny and salutary with snowy devi peaks in naked beauty. Dahlias, cosmos and morning glory as well as evening primroses gladden the seeing eye and scent the fresh air. How lovely just to breathe fully in one's own whole Being after the gasping hotness below. H.H.H. Chowji is very uppish and impish calling for Play in Natural spirituality..."

I happened to read two articles on D.H. Lawrence by Earl H. Brewster and wrote to him posing a couple of queries. He wrote back:

"I am glad to learn that you enjoyed the two articles on Lawrence in the Illustrated Weekly. *They published nearly all of the article which I sent to them but excluded some of the material which I thought would be of special interest to Indian readers, such as dealt with Lawrence's belief in the* Chakras. *Lawrence touches on that in his book* Psychoanalysis Or Theory of The Unconscious – *a book which has been too little appreciated in the West,*

probably because he was in little sympathy with the stage of psychoanalysis in the West at the time he wrote the book. Jung, however, has brought since then quite a different interpretation and view of that subject to the world than the Freudian view of Lawrence's day and I should think that present day followers of Jung would approve of Lawrence's book.

You ask about Lawrence's conception of and attitude towards Shiva and towards the Phallus. Lawrence reverenced life. And I think he saw in the Dance of Shiva the symbol of what life is, the Lila *of the Divine – such I understand to be the teaching of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagwad Gita and my own Guru – Sri Aurobindo. Thus the Isha Upanishad begins: "All this is for habitation by the Lord." Later, "He, who sees everywhere the Self in all existences and all existences in the Self, shrinks not thereafter from aught." So many other statements to the same effect. The Gita is full of them and both the Isha and the Gita uphold action (The Dance) but not attachment to action, which should be renounced to the Lord with all the results of our action – for in reality it is His world and He is the Actor and the Dancer. The Phallus is simply another symbol of the creation and the Lila of Life. If you have not read Lawrence's* Etruscan Places, *do so. I think you would find not only what he has to say of the Phallus there but also his comments on other Etruscan symbols and also his exposition of what he*

believed the form of Etruscan life was like and the place held by the guru in their lives, very interesting. Lawrence's poem, considered by many of the best judges of literature to be his greatest – The Ship of Death – is based on an Etruscan symbol. It shows clearly his belief in reincarnation. How fortunate I was to have been with him on the pilgrimage described in that book.

Perhaps by "touch" Lawrence meant real understanding and knowledge and harmony, deep and real, which sometimes – not often – comes between people and which he said produced the "rainbow." Perhaps what Jesus meant when he referred to times rarely experienced when "two or three were gathered together" in the right spirit. Such would be my interpretation of what he meant by "touch" in the deepest sense, that awareness of the true, real, essential unity between not only two human beings, but between all life – the awareness, the real awareness that all is the Divine life – the brotherhood of man and all life is God. I believe Sri Aurobindo was right in declaring that Lawrence may well have been a yogi in his former life, one who in this one had gone astray somewhat in overemphasising the importance of the vital, which I take to mean his over emphasis on the sexual. It was in fiction that he did this, not in his own life. And his fiction on this matter has been greatly misunderstood and misrepresented."

I loved seeing new places after the day's work and sometimes recorded my impressions in my diary. A few instances:

Nagpur – A cosmopolitan but conservative city of workers, very hot in summer and enjoyable in rains when green shoots of grass – soft and tender, shot up and opened their existence to soft playful breezes and sometimes there would be no sun for a whole day with the sky overcast and shadowy darkness all around, the electric light hurting the eyes. Rain came racing from one direction – a white mist, advancing and falling in a downpour. Drops of rain, white pearly things, travelled along telegraph cables, one following the other, touching it and dropping down, water shining in the grass, darkness thickening, some small insect beating its wings against the glass ventilator and the sound of its vain struggle creating a musical harmony.

Sanchi – On November 30, 1952, the occasion of installation of the remains of Maha Mogallana and Sariputta in a new Stupa on the hillock of old Stupas, in the presence of Jawahar Lal Nehru and U Nu, the Prime Ministers of India and Burma respectively, Dr. Shyam Prasad Mukherji, the President of Mahabodhi Society, Ratnanaike of Ceylon, Kushak Bikula from Ladakh, German monk Lama Govinda; the whole area between the Railway Station and the Stupa hillock a mass of tents and the celestial music of Vinayak Rao Patwardhan.

Bhusaval: Tapti. Sitting on a mound on the banks of the Tapti river, swept by strong cool breezes, watching the silvery sheen of water below and Venus above, blue black waves of clouds in the sky.

Narmada: Sacred Narmada at Jabalpur flowing by marble rocks and at Hoshangabad Sethani Ghaat in November on the occasion of eclipse – before dawn – stars fading away and the other bank beyond the water's

edge and a small whitewashed temple surrounded by green hedge – assuming a hallowed beauty in the morning light and a second time in the evening – with the moon up and shining with all her glory and the thick grove of tall trees casting dark shadows, some women offering *aarati* to Narmadaji and floating lamps in the water – pale glittering things going some distance and dying.

Ujjain: Mahakaal Temple – a *jyotirlinga* set in the midst of finely shaped silver setting and Kaliadeh Palace, built on the ruins of an old Sun Temple on the banks of the river Shipra with its lovely water courses, the river encircling the palace. The bedroom walls sprayed with silhouettes of nude girls with fine contours in blue and two pairs of birds love-making.

Kotah: Views of River Chambal from the Waterworks Tower and the hanging rock breathtaking.

Bundi: A small town with narrow lanes – nestling below a hill, where Lakshmi's mother spent her childhood with her father, the Dewan of the State. Said to be old rishi land with temples like the *Kanswa* Temple of Karneshwar Mahadev on the bank of a small stream, a sort of oasis in the midst of rocky, barren land, *Shikargarh*, a quiet picnic spot with water courses, a stepwell, Shiva's temple in a lovely, cool grove with water running all the year round and *Phool Sagar* with paintings got done by Italian painters invited by the Maharaja from Deoli Camp.

Bamora: A small station on Nagpur-Delhi Railway line. A small Shiva temple behind an ancient pipal tree – nursing a date palm and a champak tree. Red stones without mortar standing one upon another, threatening to fall. Several red stone slabs with exquisite sculptures on them lying around – they showed the sculptors' sheer revelling in sexual relationship between man and woman. Lovely curves of the figures, voluptuous breasts,

navel and thighs, finely chiselled mithuna motifs in amorous postures – symbols of creation.

During my tours I also saw Ajanta caves – from Bhusaval to Jalgaon to the caves, Gwalior Fort and Sahasrabahu temple there.

In March 1955, I received orders of my promotion to the senior time scale and regular posting as Senior Superintendent of Post Offices, South Rajasthan Division, Ajmer. By then I had got so involved with the RMS Division that I felt sad on having to leave it. I had developed very close relationship with my staff and addressed most of them by name, listened to their problems sympathetically and tried to do whatever was possible to help them. I also recognised and appreciated their talents – Netke's and Das Gupta's music, Kale's and Langde's painting, Gauri Shankar Parashar's and Gondalekar's literary flair – the former author of a novel and some short stories and a couple of film scripts and the latter editor of a Marathi magazine. This had generated a lot of goodwill and I was not surprised when in the farewell function they called me a popular officer with clear vision and thorough grasp of affairs and sense of justice. The RMS staff at Nagpur presented me with a framed farewell address which bestowed on me all sorts of complimentary epithets in chaste Sanskritised Hindi, like *snehapurna saujanyata* (loving goodwill), *madhu-ranjit muskan* (honey tinged smile) *veena vidit vaani* (Saraswati blessed speech) *guna-grahyata* (appreciation of talents of others), *milan-saarita* (cordiality), *anupama kalaa-priyata* (matchless love of arts), *yogyata* (competence), *kartavya-parayanata* (duty consciousness) and *premil vyavahaarikata* (affectionate dealing) which

touched me but also amused me. After I had left, one Palne, a Mail Guard from Chhindwara, wrote to me, "*I request for God (Bholenath) to make you take the permanent job of Superintendent at Nagpur.*" And President of RMS Class III & IV Union, H. J. Kotak, wrote,

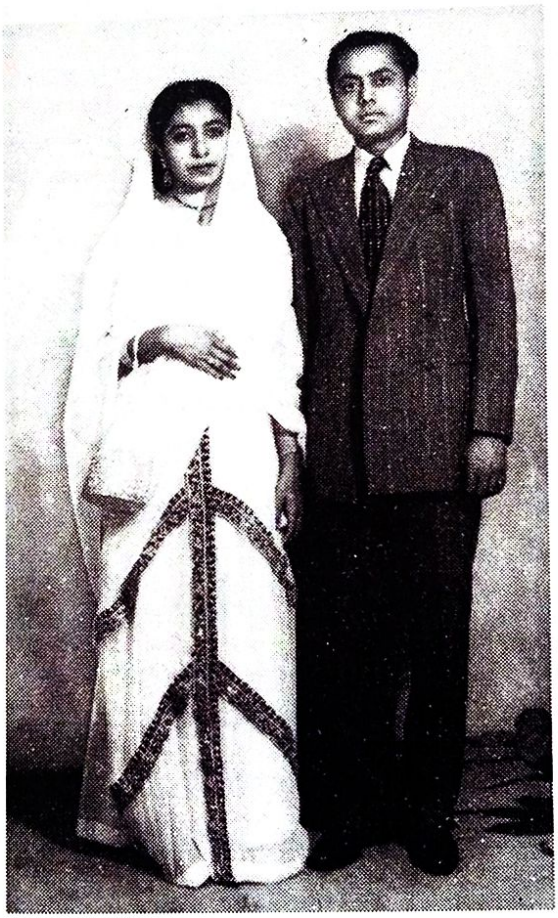
> *"I cannot but emphasise that the relations with employees you had, resulted in affection for you and I am sure that the employees will feel your absence from the Division, but I am definite that none of us will allow your memory to be diminished from our hearts and the same we hope you will cherish."*

South Rajasthan Division, with headquarters at Ajmer, was the largest postal division in Rajasthan P&T Circle. Its jurisdiction covered the whole of mono-state of Ajmer, revenue districts of Udaipur, Dungarpur, Chittor and Bhilwara and Kishengarh sub-division of Jaipur district. (By 1987, the division had been broken up into six postal divisions, viz. Ajmer, Beawar, Bhilwara, Chittor, Udaipur and Dungarpur). The posting gave me an opportunity to see quite a bit of beautiful and colourful Rajasthan, its rich cultural heritage and natural opulence.

On arrival at Ajmer from Nagpur, we billeted ourselves in the Postal Inspection Room above the General Post Office. It had a large open terrace on one side where we slept at night, gazing at the sky full of stars and listening to the melodious notes of *Raag Malkauns* floating from the side of Taragarh Fort in the stillness of the night.

The office of the Senior Superintendent was organised like postal divisional offices of Jabalpur and Nagpur Divisions that I had seen earlier, with clerks drawn from the Division dealing with different subjects. Ana Sagar Park and pavilions were my favourite spots for morning and evening walks during my short stay in the Inspection Room. From the Hanuman hillock adjoining the Ana Sagar pavilions, one got a good view of the city – Ana Sagar full of water, white-winged, long-legged herons and black-winged crows skimming the water surface in the early morning and the setting sun throwing a long strip of white light on greenish water, sparkling and rippling like mercury, in the evening, with the road skirting the Sagar getting lost in the hills and a temple on the hillside, Seth Bhagmal's bungalow and *Nasihaan*, Jain temple, standing out prominently on the other side in the midst of a thick cluster of white and cream-washed homes below the hillock of Taragarh, the city Clock Tower and the Mayo School Clock Tower further down with the surrounding Aravali hills denuded of vegetation. There was something sweet, sad and mellow about the city, with little sign of affluence or opulence. Life appeared slow, unhurried. A large number of Sindhi refugees from Pakistan had made Ajmer their home after Partition; some had government jobs but the bulk of them were in small retail trade and business. Local people, in their traditional Rajasthani dress and leisurely movement, lent colour to the place. There was a musical rhythm in their movements. Even the city buses moved without haste, did not take passengers in excess of the seats and conversation between the driver, the conductor and the passengers flowed smoothly. People on foot and in bullock carts also moved slowly, at peace with themselves and the world.

A few days after my taking over, I was able to secure a very nice residential bungalow in Adarsh Nagar, a newly developed colony, at reasonable rent. The road from Ajmer to Nasirabad passed by the side of our residence and morning walks on this lovely road were refreshing. Down this road, near the Octroi post, below a towering hillock was a small mosque with an attached grave. On the opposite side of the road was an enclosure with a white cross placed in the middle of it – a Christian cemetery. A little further down, there



Salma & Seth Karim Allah Rakha

was a Church and around it the village of Parbatpura. There were fields on both sides of the road and wells and the morning scene was enchanting, with menfolk carrying baskets of freshly picked vegetables on their cycles and women drawing water from the wells and carrying two or three pitchers on the head, walking barefoot, gracefully, along the border of fields, with

small tin containers used for drawing water dangling in one hand, their heads and necks always covered and the cloth falling on their bare backs, shapely and attractive figures in red *cholis* and black or some other dirt-absorbing colour *lehengas*. One morning I saw a small girl dressed in traditional trappings and a small boy with red turban on a cart driven by their father. When I looked at them, they gave me a beautiful smile and the boy said, "*Jai Ramji Ki*". I responded with a smile and a nod. There were other scenes of touching intimacy on the road – a *pipal* tree extending its arms around the waist of a slim, straight *neem* tree, a black and white spotted he-dog and a deep yellow spotted she-dog always sitting side by side, day after day, a newly married young couple on a cart, sitting cheek by jowl.

While at Ajmer I saw some places of historical, religious and archaeological interest, like the holyDargah of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, Arrhai-din-ka jhompra, Taragarh Fort, Mughal Fort, Ana Sagar and seven miles north of the city, Pushkar. The Dargah of Chishti was commenced in the reign of Altamash and completed in that of the Mughal King Humayun. It is a place of pilgrimage from all over and draws huge crowds during the Urs of the Khwaja. Arrhai-din-ka-jhompra was originally a Jain temple constructed by Seth Vikramdeva Kala in 660 AD, later converted into a Sanskrit College in 1153 AD by Raja Vasadev, turned into a mosque during the reign of Altamash. Taragarh Fort, constructed during the reign of Raja Ajaipal, was originally called Garh Beetli. The Mughal Fort was built by Akbar and is commonly known as "Magazine" and houses the Rajputana Museum of Ajmer. Pushkar is known for its lake and the only temple of Brahma in the country. It has a number of other temples also, Amateshwar Shiva

temple, Savitri temple, Badrinarayana temple, Varah temple. A big cattle fair is held here in Kartik Shukla which draws a large number of people, including tourists from abroad. Ana, whose father Raja Ajaipal is said to have founded the city of Ajmer, got the Ana Sagar embankment constructed. Subsequently, Shah Jehan had a magnificent range of pavilions erected on the embankment.

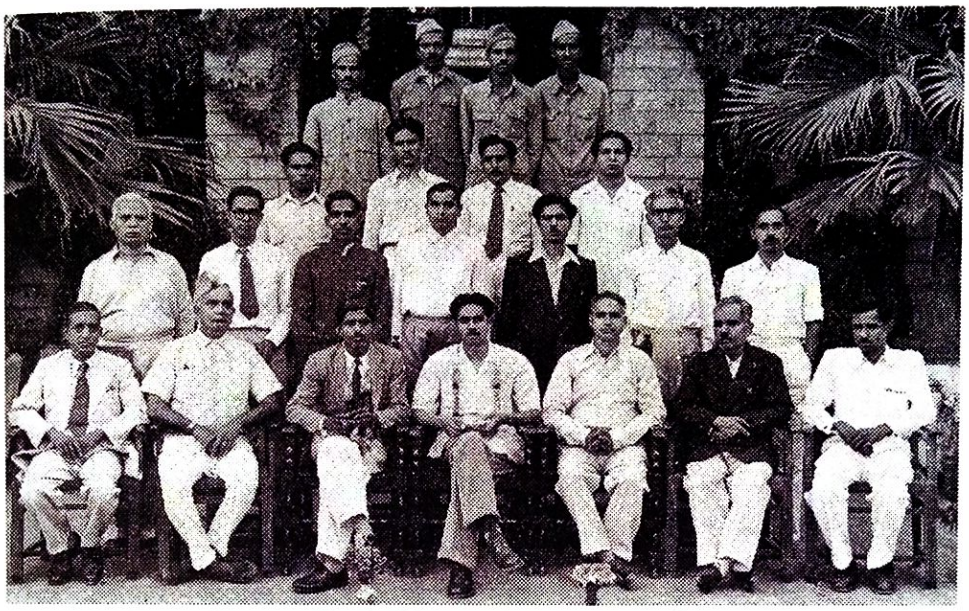
Udaipur was an important Head Post Office and I visited it three or four times. The train journey lay via Chittorgarh and Mavali junction. Chittor Fort had some historical buildings inside, the Keerti Stambha, the Vijay Stambha, Rani Padmini's water palace and the place where she committed *Jauhar* and the Krishna temple where the legendary Meerabai worshipped her beloved Lord. At Mavali Junction, one could get saffron-milk early in the morning. Once when I went for the inspection of Udaipur Head Post Office and visits to some sub-offices en route, I took my wife and son along. At Kankroli we saw the Dwarkadish temple, Rajasamand Lake where seaplanes landed during World War II and the Maharana's palace. At Nathdwara, a famous place of pilgrimage with Shrinathji's temple, we had special *darshan* courtesy the local postal staff, particularly the beat postman concerned and my wife made some purchases of artistic ivory pieces including one showing Radha and Krishna under a *Kadamba* tree with arrangement for its illumination. At Udaipur we stayed in the Dak Bungalow located just below Anand Bhawan and Lakshmi Niwas, the former a sort of State Hotel and the latter, the State Guest House. It was the month of June and cool, soothing breezes floated in from the hillocks across the waters of the two lakes – Pichhola Sagar and Fateh Sagar – both of which as also the canal connecting them were within view from the veranda of

the Dak Bungalow. Pichhola Sagar, built by erecting a bund on the river that flowed through Sajan Bagh, looked magnificent with Jaganiwas and Jagamandir and two other small structures in it. While Jaganiwas was the Udaipur Maharaja's palace, Jagamandir was got ready for Moghul Prince Khurram and Mumtaz Mahal for their stay during their banishment. Sajan Bagh is a spacious and well-kept garden with Sheeshmahal, used as a museum in the centre with Jai Amba and another old gun in front. The museum had a glass bed, glass chairs and tables. We also visited Sahelion Ki Bari situated below the main embankment of Fateh Sagar Lake – a well-laid garden with mango and guava trees and a summer palace surrounded by lovely fountains on all four sides with beaked birds spouting water. We found the fountain on the back side the loveliest – four elephants in white marble around the lotus tank and four lions in the centre and above them, all sorts of birds with upturned beaks and spread out wings.

During another visit, I spent a quiet enjoyable evening sitting on the bank of Fateh Sagar, seeing the water lapping against the banks of the lake, electric lights making rippling ribbons on the water and the crescent moon trailed by a big star below it, shedding a glimmering light on the face of the lake. On a third visit to Udaipur, I took a trip to Dungarpur, a tribal belt with backward areas where community development work was on. On the way, I stopped at Rishabhdev, a village which was earlier known as Dhooldev. It has a beautiful Jain temple with extensive carvings on stone walls and ceiling, some finely chiselled elephants, and *mithuna* poses. The icon of Rishabdev was reported to have been brought here from Aspur, Baroda in *Samvat* 931 and the stone for construction of the temple from Balakh. At this temple

the finest Spanish saffron is offered to the deity. On another occasion, I made a visit to Jaisamand, 32 miles away, known as the biggest artificial lake. It was a grand sight.

Besides Udaipur HO, I carried out the inspection of Nasirabad Head Post Office in accordance with the



Staff of SSPO Ajmer

prescribed questionnaire. Nasirabad was an important military station, headquarters of the Grenadiers. I was told that it was so named after Sir David Ochterloney who was stationed here as in-charge of the Rajputana Division after the termination of Pindari war 1817-1818 and on whom Shah Alam of Delhi bestowed the title of Nasiruddaula. I also visited Bhilwara, a centre of cotton and mica business and saw the mica mines.

While at Kishengarh, for the inspection of the Kishengarh Post Office, I enjoyed viewing paintings of the Kishengarh School and walking on the Kishengarh-Jaipur road in thick fog, fog turning into water drops and staying in the hair and on the eyebrows and eyelashes and clothes as though Nature had sprayed its benediction on me. During the evening walk the next day, I sat on a stone, gazing at the evening star above fleecy clouds tinged with crimson by the setting sun and had a feeling

of being in touch with the sky, the earth and Divinity.

What interested me more than the detailed tedious inspection according to a set questionnaire and verification of accounts, was work relating to extension of postal facilities and opening of new branch offices, particularly in backward areas. Keshav Das, in the Divisional office, who dealt with such cases, had a neat, bold handwriting and he would prepare each case neatly with value return figures showing income and expenditure and indicate whether the proposed post office could be opened within the permissible limit of loss and I felt happy when I approved the proposal. During my brief stay of less than a year in the Division, I opened a large number of post offices, particularly in Dungarpur and Udaipur tribal and rural areas. Complaints and investigation work also interested me. Particularly interesting and peculiar to Ajmer were complaints relating to money orders that came to the *Khadims* of the Dargah. Some addresses of senders of such money orders to one *Khadim* were misappropriated by another. Collusion of postmen was alleged. To the senders, all *Khadims* were alike; they sent money as thanksgiving to the Khwaja, for fulfilment or future fulfilment of their wishes. *Khadims* appeared to have made it quite a trade.

I loved the ambience of Ajmer and would have liked to stay there longer but I was not allowed to complete even a year there and was called up to Delhi to take over as Senior Superintendent, Delhi Sorting and Air Mail Division.

10

When I arrived in Delhi, I found that the office-cum-residential accommodation for the Senior Superintendent by the side of Kashmiri Gate General Post Office at Lothian Road was under demolition for reconstruction. The office was functioning in a rented accommodation in Saraswati Insurance multi-storeyed building near Delite Cinema, one of the buildings that had replaced the old historical city wall between Delhi Gate and Ajmeri Gate, under the D.A.G. Extension Scheme. For his residence, the Senior Superintendent was required to make his own arrangements.

We stayed for a few days with my sister-in-law who was a teacher-cum-warden of Air Force Central School in the Air Force Camp premises on Race Course Road. Ashoka Hotel had just come up – an impressive, imposing structure, towering high and magnificent. The vistas and avenues of Diplomatic Enclave were lovely stretches of green grass and upcoming rows of trees. A very quiet, clean and open area for walks. After three or four months

of efforts to get some suitable house at reasonable rent, we got one, H-14 Jangpura Extension, one of the houses allotted to refugees from Pakistan, behind Eros Cinema.

Workload in the office was quite heavy and three mail sorting centres – Delhi RMS at Delhi Main Junction, Airport Sorting Office at Safdarjang Airport and Paper Sorting Office at Kashmiri Gate posed problems. Prickly personalities – some aggressive, impudent Union office bearers who barged in with complaints and threats unceremoniously, causing irritation and tension. One evening there was a demonstration by staff in the Paper Sorting Office and later at midnight in front of my residence, followed by a lightning strike, entailing a lot of disciplinary action.

Commuting between the residence and office, particularly in the evening, after office, was bothersome and exhausting. One had to walk up to Delhi Gate bus stop to catch a bus. Buses from Delhi Railway Station, Red Fort and Daryaganj side often came full and one had to wait for the next bus or take a seat in one of the ear-splitting *phatphaties*. I held office for more than two years in this building which stood Janus-faced between Old Delhi and New Delhi. From my office room on the second floor in this six-storeyed building, the dome of Rashtrapati Bhawan with Rashtrapati's flag fluttering high above it and domes of the Central Secretariat looked magnificent with all the charm and magic of distance, shimmering in the dull summer sun, mellow and hazy in the winter mist, sometimes overshadowed by rain-bearing clouds. North and South Blocks of the Central Secretariat appeared to have a certain grandeur and an air of mystery about them. Office of the Director-General of P&T was there. For officers from outstations visiting Delhi, it was the holy Mecca as it were and some postal officers coming from different circles to pay their homage, would sometimes drop in for a cup of tea, as in a wayside

inn and narrate interesting titbits about their encounters with and their impressions of senior officers.

From the window of my office room, the area between the domes and the Circular Road looked like a jungle – green tops of trees with thick foliage on the boughs, and beyond that, Connaught Place with its restaurants and shops and cinemas and its daily fashion parade and still further, Broadcasting House on Parliament Street, once the place of my work. The nearest in view were the *pipal* trees lining the Circular Road. I saw from my window their leaves yellowing and falling and new tender green and copper leaves coming up and fluttering in the breeze like so many bulbs. With the onset of autumn, branches of trees would become bare, leafless, the tops of some buildings would start showing and the road in front of Irwin Hospital looked like a fine black ribbon and on it flowed all sorts of traffic – *phatphaties* hurtling, spluttering away at breakneck speed, cars gliding smoothly, buses and trucks hooting their horns, motorcycles, cycles, pedestrians, slow-moving bullock-carts. Between the road below the DAG Extension buildings and the Circular Road, lay the well-known Ramlila Grounds, where besides the annual Ramlila, mammoth public meetings took place. Before I came to Delhi, Khrushchev and Bulganin had swayed crowds and in my time, Chou-En-Lai, Dalai Lama, Panchem Lama and several others addressed crowds. From my window I could see only the gate and the rostrum of the Ramlila Ground. Nearer me, was Bal Bhawan – children's playground barricaded by barbed wire (later it shifted to its present premises) and just below my window lay an open space with criss-cross patterns made by the footsteps of pedestrians crossing between the hospital and the multi-storeyed buildings. There would be men getting a massage or *champi*, men relaxing in the sun, boys cleaning cars, homeless beggars frozen cold in winter night regaining

warmth and life in the rays of the sun, urchins from Turkman Gate playing the game of *gulli-danda*, some groups playing cards, union workers organizing meetings at lunch hour, some business house hosting a reception with *shamiana* and *kanaats*, some city *lalas* and Muslim *buzurglog* from back lanes having a stroll in the evening and an odd couple getting into intimate position after dusk. When it rained, it left behind little pools of water and some crows and kites sailed down to drink water while some swallows and house sparrows swam in them.

The scene below and on the other side, seen from the rear window of the office hall, presented a different picture – a jumble of high and low houses cheek by jowl, narrow lanes, only a few patches of green, mostly *neem* trees and at a distance, minarets of Jama Masjid and spires of Red Fort and closer, in the near view, cots, bricks, pots and pans, clothes put out to dry, broken *tonga* wheels, parked carts and rickshaws, pigeons, white, grey and spotted and smoke rising from the *chulahs*, mud stoves. Also visible was a taxi stand, a cycle stand and a rickshaw stand. Waves of discordant notes and noises floated in from all directions – blaring of horns of motor vehicles, jingle of tonga horse bridle chains, spluttering of *phatphaties*, phutphuting their way, *thup thap* of horses' hoofs, whimper of scooters and hum of human conversation in my office and down below on the road, shouts of *jal-zeerawalas*, ice-cream-walas and *kulche-chole-walas* spreading the mouth watering flavour of cooked grams steaming away. The ringing of telephones added to the plethora of sounds. Borne on the waves of these sounds, while I listened to the staff who came up with their complaints or requests or copies of their and their relatives' testimonials for attestation (everyone in Delhi seemed to be applying for some other and better job) or recorded my recommendations on application cards for membership of Delhi Public Library (more than half the staff became members of the Library on my

recommendation and it gave me the feeling that I was being instrumental in the cultivation and enrichment of their minds) or explained to the officials transferred or punished the justification of the orders, flow of files from the office continued till they piled up into a sort of pyramid, sometimes looking like one of those small off-the-road temples with walls of stone pieces placed one upon or beside the other. Each file had a story to tell, some case of promotion or increment, some report of missent letters, suspected abstraction, some item of inspection report, some Union demand and so on. Bright day would fade into murky dusk tackling the files until the office chowkidar's wife lighted her *angithi* on the first floor and smoke from it wafted up making it impossible to continue sitting with the window and door open. The office clerks would have left by then. The Assistant Superintendent, DC Salwan and the Head Clerk, RC Choudhury would still be there, poring over the daily reports or seeing some file. I would close shop and wend my way to the bus stop.

On **31 December, 1957**, I noted in my diary:

"Cultural scene of New Delhi is varied and vibrant. So many things are happening all over – plays, exhibitions, dance performances, music sessions, films, *kavi sammelans*, *mushairas* and talks, not to speak of the preparations for the annual pageant of the Republic Day Parade on Rajpath on the 26th January. There was the UNESCO session in Vigyan Bhawan and reception to its delegates at the National Stadium, Festival of Lights in Talkatora Gardens on the occasion of Diwali, performances of Mongolian Cultural Delegation and Russian acrobats at the National Stadium and demonstration of *Yogasanas* by Dhirendra Brahmachari in the presence of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Jai Prakash Narayan at the football stadium near Delhi Gate. Besides these, we saw a number of plays at the

open air theatre in Talkatora Gardens, Udaya Shankar's shadow play *The Buddha* at the National Stadium, *Angels of Love or Perils of Purity*, a delightful comedy presented by the U.K. High Commission Amateur Dramatic Club and *Dear Charles* by Army Headquarters A.D.C., Punjabi opera *Heer Ranjha* at the All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society (AIFACS) Hall, *Gioconda Smile* presented by the Unity Theatre at Y.M.C.A. Hall and *Ramayana* by Bharatiya Kala Kendra at the Football Stadium. We also saw a few exhibitions – Exhibits connected with the 1857 centenary at Rashtrapati Bhawan, paintings of M.F. Hussain and Kashmir landscapes by M.N. Kaul, exhibits of forty famous photographers of the world, a Rajasthani artist's exhibits, International Exhibition of Contemporary Art, Chinese floral designs, French nudes and Brazilian sketches, and Leela Mukherji's wood sculpture, all at the AIFACS Hall, Exhibits by Satish Gujral, Amina Ahmed, M.F. Hussain and Bhagat in *Salon de Refuses* at the Modern School on Barakhambha Road, Amrita Sher-gil's paintings at the National Museum and the National Art Gallery in Jaipur House and Bhagat's sculptures on Curzon Road. We attended some elevating dance performances – *Bharatanatyam* by the legendary Balasaraswati at the Talkatora Gardens Open Air Theatre and Roshan Vajifdar's at Sapru House auditorium, also Indrani Rehman's *Bharatanatyam* and *Odissi*, Damayanti Joshi's *Kathak* and a cocktail of dances at the AIFACS Hall including Jhaveri sisters' Manipuri items and Gopinath in various moods and *rasas*, Kandian dances presented by Gunayya and Rukmini Devi's presentation of Ramayana in dance. We listened to soulful singing of Kumar Gandharva at the National Physical Laboratory Hall and heard the music of renowned music makers, vocal and instrumental, in the Community Hall on Panchkuin Road and open space opposite Mandi House

on Copernicus Marg, Hindi poetry in a *kavi-goshthi* at the tomb of Abdur Rahim Khan-e-Khanan and Urdu *ghazals* in a *mushaira* at the IAF Station on Race Course Road. We saw some enjoyable and memorable films – *All This and Heaven Too* (Charles Boyer and Bette Davis), *War and Peace* (Audrey Hepburn and Mel Ferrer) *Anastasia* (Yul Brenner and Ingrid Bergman), *Camille* (Greta Garbo), *Loves of Carmen* (Rita Hayworth), *Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (Gregory Peck, Jennifer Jones and Fredric March), *Love is a Many-Splendoured Thing* (Jennifer Jones) and *Teahouse in the August Moon* in English, *Mother India* (Nargis), *Jaagate Raho* (Raj Kapur and David), *Pardesi* (Nargis and a Russian actor), *Musafir*, *Pyasa* (Guru Dutt) and *Do Aankhen Baara Haath* (V Shantaram and Sandhya) in Hindi and *Pather Panchali* in Bengali. We went to the British Council Library to hear Prof. Blunden talk on "Poetry of My Time", to the USIS Library to hear Prof. Davis speak on "American Literature" and to the Constitution Club on Curzon Road to listen to Jiddu Krishnamurti's philosophic discourses organised in the open on one side of the club building by Kitty Shiva Rao – discourses on fundamental concepts like Life, Love, Death, Desire, Knowledge, Perception and Action, Religious Mind and Meditation. "Meditation," he said, "is a state of the mind which looks at everything with complete attention ... Meditation is to be aware of every thought and every feeling, just to watch it and move with it, out of which comes silence ..."

With all the pressures and tension of work in the office and relaxation in cultural programmes, I still found time to read some books like *India in Upanishads* by B. Upadhyaya, *Dr. Zhivago* by Boris Pasternak, *The Sleepwalkers* and *Trial of the Dinosaur* by Arthur Koestler,

The Boons of Perception and Heaven and Hell by Aldous Huxley, *The Man Who Died* by D.H. Lawrence and *A Many Splendoured Thing* by Han Suyin in English and *Baan Bhatt ki Aatma Katha* by Hazari Prasad Dwivedi and *Jahaaz Ka Panchhi* by Ila Chandra Joshi in Hindi.

We saw the changing face of Delhi and New Delhi – new colonies like Model Town, Roop Nagar, Kamala Nagar and University Enclave, Patel Nagar, Lajpat Nagar, Nizammudin, Jangpura, Kalkaji, Kailash, Malaviya Nagar, Hauz Khas, Gautam Nagar, Diplomatic Enclave, Medical Enclave, Vinaya Nagar, Sewa Nagar and Pant Nagar, all swarming with people and fashionable localities like Sundar Nagar, Kaka Nagar and Golf Links. When we came, the Reserve Bank building on Parliament Street was nearing completion and AIFACS Building was ready. In place of what used to be the AIFACS Hall adjacent to Broadcasting House on Parliament Street, construction of a multi-storeyed All India Radio building had commenced. Dak Tar Bhawan building was also nearing completion. Ashoka Hotel, Janpath Hotel, Vigyan Bhawan, Krishi Bhawan and Shastri Bhawan buildings had already come up. Construction work on the U. K. High Commission and the U. S. Embassy buildings in Diplomatic Enclave commenced during our short stay in the I.A.F. School premises. Long rows of railway quarters along the Delhi-Vinayanagar local train track had come up. There was considerable new construction from Delhi Gate to Bhogal on Mathura Road – *Indian Express* multi-storeyed building, Pratap Bhawan, Central Board of Revenue building and Dr. Sen's Nursing Home on one side and The Foreign Post, Indian Standards Institute and the Controller and Auditor General's office buildings on the other side and at the end of Hardinge Avenue, the Supreme Court. Besides the statues of Asaf Ali and Deshbandhu Gupta, Tilak's statue had also been

erected during this period. The Delhi-Ajmeri Gate (DAG) Scheme buildings came up before we came but the corner multi-storeyed building near Delhi Gate on this axis was completed recently. New Lajpat Rai market opposite Red Fort and Shankar Market behind the Connaught Place complex were also recent additions and New Delhi of 1957 was not the same as the New Delhi of 1950. The dirty stalls at the end of Curzon Road were not there in 1950. By 1957, Okhla had been nicely developed into a picnic spot, the Clock Tower in Chandni Chowk had disappeared and in its place stood a gun. New Delhi Railway Station wore a new look and the façade of Delhi Main Junction had also been given a facelift. So many changes and in such a short span of time! Pace of life was becoming faster and being cast in different patterns.

When the reconstruction of RMS Bhawan on Lothian Road was completed, I took possession of it and shifted my office and residence there. There was a constant drizzle of refined coal dust and soot and the din and screech of hooting and whistling of shunting railway engines. The floors in the new building accumulated black coal dust. The clothes, bed sheets, quilt covers, mosquito nets, all got blackened overnight. The polluted air we had to breathe day in and day out, the smoke rising from coal *chulahs* of lower grade railway employees' families living along the railway line that we had to inhale mornings and evenings and the overwhelming, all-pervading blackness of smoke from steam engines almost suffocated us. The new place in old Delhi appeared far from New Delhi, the seat of the Central Government and Embassies and Missions of foreign countries and the centre of all sorts of political, social and cultural activities, reports of which filled the pages of newspapers – complimentary copies of five-six of them sent to me by virtue of my being the Controlling

Officer of the Paper Sorting Offices where they were posted.

On taking over charge of the Air Mail and Sorting Division, I had set before me the three-fold task of (i) improving the working conditions of the staff, (ii) streamlining mail-sorting work and (iii) improving discipline. I worked quietly and steadily for the achievement of the task. After more than three and a half years of efforts towards fulfilment of the task, I had the satisfaction of having achieved a great measure of success, by (i) decongesting Delhi RMS and Airport Sorting Offices and opening New Delhi RMS Office in the newly constructed Railway Station and providing tiffin rooms with water coolers in important offices working round the clock, (ii) rationalising sorting work by concentrating all the parcel sorting work in one office, combining the work of two main Paper Sorting Offices in one and opening small Paper Sorting Offices on the premises of large mailers like *The Soviet Land*, USIS, Publication Division and Audio Visual Publicity Mailing centres.

My experience of working in Delhi Sorting and Air Mail Division was enriching. I summed up the lessons learnt from my experience into the formula P^3F, i.e. (i) Patience with Staff Unions and provocative, nerve-racking and irritating stratagems employed by their leaders, patience in the face of occasional pinpricks from the Controlling Circle Office, also patience in listening to personal problems of the staff, (ii) Politeness in dealing with all classes of staff who were conscious of their rights and personal dignity in a democratic set up, (iii) Promptness in redressing grievances, noticing irregularities, nipping down any nonsense and indiscipline in the bud, taking prompt action on complaints of Unions and on directions from higher authorities and (iv) Firmness in handling men and matters after careful consideration.

An image generated at the close of my service in the Division persists in my memory to this day – the image of a faded weather-beaten *shamiana* precariously propped on poles that made angles of different degrees, jutting out of the RMS wing of Delhi Junction, several red handcarts lying helter-skelter or arranged in nice rows depending upon the time of the day and red mail vehicles disgorging camel-coloured jute bags full of mails and taking in such bags, some khaki-clad porters and some rough, unkempt, unshaven, shabbily dressed mail *babus*. The Delhi RMS *shamiana* seemed symbolic of RMS workers in general – ragged, rugged, weather-beaten, serviceable, shabbily dressed officials, sorting letters and parcels day in and day out, in the deafening noise of shrieking, whistling, shunting engines and clattering rakes and the enveloping soot and smoke, loading and unloading mail bags day and night, in sun and rain and cold, opening, closing and sealing bags in the running trains and handling the contents of such bags carrying the dust of so many post and RMS offices and sections on them. I remember my association with RMS people with fondness and nostalgia.

In December 1959, I was posted as Deputy Director in the office of the Director, Postal Services, Delhi Circle – a minor Circle headed by a Director and controlling just six units – one mail sorting division, two postal divisions of Delhi and New Delhi, two general post offices, GPO Delhi at Lothian Road and Gol Dak Khana and a Manager Mail Motor Service. The office had moved from Eastern Court on Janpath to the first floor of Dak Tar Bhawan on Parliament Street, the upper floors having been occupied by the offices of the Director-General Posts and Telegraphs. I worked there for less than three months and was persuaded by Col. D. S. Virk, the head of Indian Army Postal Service to apply for a temporary Commission to join the Army Postal Service.

I joined the Army Postal service Centre, Kampti, for training, in March 1960 and was commissioned in the army rank of Major.

Kampti cantonment was a small army station with only one Officers' Mess housed in one of the bungalows on Mall Road. The station had two training centres – the National Cadet Corps Centre commanded by Lt. Col. Grewal, a tall, stout Sikh with a swagger and Army Postal Service Centre commanded by Major Frietas, a short, dark-complexioned man with a kind Christian visage, straight back and broad shoulders who carried himself with dignity. There was a military hospital, a small supply and transport unit and an EME unit. It was virtually a mini-India in the heart of the country with officers and men from different parts of India encapsuled in the tiny military station. There was a spirit of bonhomie and good cheer and a relaxed atmosphere. A far cry from Delhi Sorting and Air Division with its nerve-racking nettling Unions and pressures of work.

Military training was tough, but three of us, direct recruits to the Indian Postal Service, Class I who joined together enjoyed it all the same. Major Frietas got us fully equipped with appropriate kits within a day or so of our arrival. We went for morning PT in white PT kit and light canvas shoes and after breakfast, for military training in OG and heavy black ankle boots. The Maratha Light Infantry NCO seconded to the APS Centre on ERE, who put us through our paces, was a remarkable young man – sinewy muscles and a stern poker face (I never saw him smile). He taught us everything – drill, marching, aiming and shooting with rifle, sten gun and pistol, bayonet fixing and charging. We were also taken to the nearby ranges for long range shooting exercises. It was all new and quite exciting and we were keen to learn.

On completion of training I was asked to take over as Commandant of the APS Centre and Officer-in-charge, Records. I have very vague memories of my 6-7 months' tenure as Commandant. I wonder if I contributed anything new or substantial to the Centre and the Record Office, except recruiting one or two good football players to strengthen the football team (the reigning passion with everyone). The activities included visiting the office of the DAG P&T, Nagpur, two or three times to settle some long outstanding cases; ensuring satisfactory inspection of the Centre by the Bombay Sub Area Commander, Brigadier Kamta Prasad, who held a captive audience of listeners to his *shikar* stories in the Mess and leading a team of Warrant Officers to the Nagpur Assembly Hall in aid to civil, to handle official mail during the strike of civil Postal employees. JCO Menon took care of the training schedules and Lt. Vij with JCO Rao managed the Record

Office and I sat back rather stiff in uniform, learning things that I didn't know before and keeping the flag flying, as they say.

I have a few entries from my diary of the period:

March 8, 1960: Against the backdrop of trees, the torrent of rain appears interminable; it makes shining puddles on the tarred road and water-laden leaves facing the sun sparkle like diamonds. Perennials in the pots, the thigh-high hedge in the Mess, the black tarred road and beyond that a couple of red roses, the lawn, the tall tamarind trees and the roof tiles of the Mess building look clean and washed.

March 30, 1960: Reading a book on Buddhism, I meditate on the observation, "Every generation of men and women vanishes away like the leaves and flowers of forgotten summers," and I see dry leaves sailing down, forming a heap on the ground while new raw lovely green shoots and tender leaves wave in the breeze and monkeys jump from branch to branch. I marvel at their freedom from time which so binds and weighs us down and I think of the four qualities mentioned by Lord Buddha that should come with the cleansing of our hearts – *metta/ mitra* or universal love, *karuna* or compassion, *mudita* or joy and *upekha* or equanimity and feel how empty of these are our lives.

April 21, 1960: It was quite hot during the day but walk on the Kanhan riverside was refreshing at sunset time. A tenderness came over the sun as he approached *Sandhya* of *shyama* colour. She blushed as she dragged him to herself. The blush spread and deepened as the sun slided into her and she was beautiful in her abashment and her soft crimson blush and above her the star maidens giggled a golden laughter. Quiet descended. Nearer to me I saw dark-skinned naked boys

bathing in knee-deep waters of the river, scores of swallows circling over the waters and a solitary *saaras* with a long beak and legs stretched back together flapping his way to his mate.

April 22, 1960: It was a windy day and the whole atmosphere was full of *sumbal* cotton; it fell from the tall, leafless trees like flakes of snow and got stuck in the dry grass and gathered along the path and came into the room and flew all around. It appeared as though the grass had produced white cotton flowers in profusion.

In the evening we climbed to the Ramtek Temple, barefoot, just Lavi, Lakshmi and me, in the deepening dusk of the dying day, the full moon rising from the east, filling the whole expanse down below us with indescribable beauty in shimmering mist, touching a

Lakshmi & Lavi

spark in the heart to hug and kiss – a tender pure contact of innocent, sensitive souls and vibrating bodies in that sacred spot where, a little above, Kalidas is said to have composed his *Meghdoot*, a spot whose dust was replete with footprints of devotees visiting here over centuries.

May 7, 1960: Two trees, a *neem* and a date palm, appear love-locked – a branch of the former coming down from behind to hold the upper part of the latter, with its top bent a little over the head of the date palm in a pose of protective contact. They look like a lover and a beloved standing like men and women in amorous poses on the walls of some temples but more alive, more eloquent in their mute existence, in their pure being, the disembodied spirits of these two trees tip-toeing to me in empathy.

The year 1960 was coming to a close and there was no sign of the promised post of Assistant Director, Army Postal Service at the APS Headquarters in Delhi coming through. In January 1961, I received orders posting me as Deputy Assistant Director APS XI Corps at Jullundhar and I relinquished charge of the post of Commandant and Officer-in-Charge Records, APS on 6th January 1961. My confidential record for the period up to 6th January 1961 was written by Brigadier Kamta Prasad. Part-II of it was shown to me and I found that the Sub Area Commander had been quite generous in his remarks like,

> "He has a pleasant and dignified personality and is of amiable nature. He gets the work done by his personal example and he is deliberate and not impulsive."
>
> "A smartly turned out Officer who is

unassuming, intelligent, extremely hard working and conscientious. He is loyal, thoroughly reliable and very pleasant to talk to. A tactful officer who possesses a lot of confidence and is liked by all concerned. He is well read and expresses himself very well both verbally and in writing."

At Dharmshala

I moved to Jullundhar in the middle of January 1961 and had to stay there in the rank of Major for another one and a half years or so, for the first few months in a rented bungalow in Model Town, a newly developed colony and later in hutment type accommodation in B. I. Lines. Jullundhar was very much a milk and *lassi* city then, ringed around by green countryside. In Model Town, four or five bungalows from ours, stretched vast fields of wheat and, in a couple of bungalows opposite, fresh milk was available straight from the buffalo's udders, quite cheap. We got *The Times of India* published from Delhi for two *annas*. Jullundhar city looked lousy and a bit dirty. But the cantonment was clean and spick and span with roads well maintained and well marked. There was little work compared to

the load I had carried in my civil assignments. Fellow officers were good and helpful. I had the pleasure of working with two of the best army Generals – Lt. Gen Daulat Singh and Lt. Gen. Henderson Brooks. They were always considerate and generous. General Daulat Singh, exuded grace and good breeding – a thorough gentleman, reticent to a degree, eloquent in his own way, not with words, but with gestures. He was a regular evening walker like me and we often crossed each other on the Mall and his acknowledgement of my salute was so graceful – a smile, a nod of the head. After he went over to Simla as Army Commander, General Henderson Brooks took over. He was loquacious and his sermons to fellow officers in the weekly briefing meetings were full of humour and punch. He talked about the respect and dignity Indian Army Officers enjoyed earlier; they could walk into a store and order things and the store in-charge would be obsequious and obliging. Their word was true. The payment followed in due course. He urged officers to live in style according to their status and not be unnecessarily stingy. He embodied in himself the virtues of a typical British Army Officer, including the swagger. In one of these meetings, he got me, "Look young man, your hair will get caught in telegraph wires." This was his way of ticking me off and advising me to get my hair trimmed properly. My immediate boss was the AQ, Lt. Col. Rodriques – a bull-doggish looking Goan, who, though outwardly forbidding, was kind hearted.

He gave me the following remarks in my confidential report:

> "Energetic officer, alive to professional duties who takes keen interest in military matters", "is sound of judgement,

displays initiative and is thorough in his work. Trustworthy and sincere", "intelligent, willing, dependable", "reserved disposition, alert and has a keen sense of humour. Polite, tactful and well mannered. Exhibits high sense of duty", "confident and resourceful", "socially pleasant, quiet nature, tends to remain aloof. Expresses himself well."

My first experience of staying in a tent was exciting. It was a small unit with a detachment FPO located at Ludhiana, which had arrangements for lodging visiting officers in a tent. But, the most exciting and memorable event was the exercise conducted in the fields of the Punjab where a Division and an Independent Brigade were the adversaries. We moved and lived in real field conditions with makeshift arrangements. The briefing at the end of the exercise at Samrala Guest House was simply superb – the analysis was so logically presented that I felt proud of belonging, even though on a temporary commission, to the Indian Army. Soon thereafter, the Division moved for a task – the liberation of Goa.

DADAPS had a concurrent responsibility for Postal advice at the command level. This necessitated one or two visits a year to the Command Headquarters at Simla, where I stayed in the Officers' Mess on the Mall going down to Chhota Simla, and interacted with some officers in the huge Command Headquarters building, below the Simla District Courts.

There are only two entries of this period in my diary:

January 24, 1962: Sitting in the lawn of B.I. Lines residence I see the sun without brightness, mellow and soft. Several sparrows are nibbling at the grass, a black-

winged *bulbul* is tackling a banana peeling, agile, alert, showing now and then the beautiful red under its tail, crows have descended on the wall and one of them is feeding its young by putting its beak into the young one's, a few *galgalias* (*gataries*) are walking on the lawn, shifting their weight from leg to leg like some well-fed, well-clothed, heavy-bellied women.

March 13, 1962: Mt. Abu – Sunset Point, 3871 ft. above sea level. People looking at the sun hanging low a few yards above the horizon, in a pool of mist and Banas stream meandering its way. The sun looks like a blood red ball, falls to the horizon slowly, stands there for a few seconds before sliding down, setting the clouds on fire. Stars start springing in the firmament. Walking to the Naki Lake, I sit down, watching the lights suspended in the calm, still waters of the lake.

The post of ADAPS in the rank of Lt. Col. at the Army Headquarters materialised in September '62 and I moved to Delhi. The office of the APS Directorate was located in one of the old musty yellow painted hutments near South Block which had come up during the Second World War and housed a number of offices of the Defence and Civil establishments of the Government of India – "F" Block, "G" Block, "N" Block, DHQ Post Office, Army Dental Centre, a Signals Centre, Army HQ MI Room and CSD Canteen, etc. Our office was in a set of rooms in "G" Block. Residential accommodation didn't pose any problem. Ramakrishnapuram was coming up as a large Central Government accommodation complex and four sectors were ready, two of them occupied more or less. One sector, Sector 2, was taken over by the QMG for service officers and I was allotted a quarter there. The accommodation was small and below status, but a decision

had been taken to house officers up to the rank of Lt. Col and equivalent in other services in these double-storeyed blocks and we could not crib or complain. We had good neighbours – Captain Jerath above us, Captain Mehra in the opposite block, Wing Commander Jungalwala just opposite and above him Captain Kishan Singh, a well-known Polo player. There was enough space for children to play. A small MI Room detachment and a CSD Canteen had also been established in the block. Bus terminus was at a stone's throw. But, I had my Morris-8 to carry us to and fro. Hauz Khas tank was a few yards away and my son and I often went for walks, sometimes skirting the dry tank and sometimes straight through it, up the stairs of old Hauz Khas structures. IIT complex was the only construction between RK Puram sectors and the Qutub Minar to which we walked over brambles and bushes and virgin countryside.

The office of the Army Postal Directorate was well organised. There was the Director assisted by the Assistant Director i.e. me and the Staff Captain who looked after the postal location centre and complaints. Rest of the work, mainly staff and establishment functions, like recruitment, training, deputation, placement, liaison with the Civil P&T Department, inspection and control of odd units, raising of units, etc. was to be attended to by the Assistant Director. Workload was very light. The strength of the Army Postal Service was quite small, less than two hundred men and thirty odd officers. There were only two major formations – XI Corps in the Punjab with a DADAPS at the Headquarters in Jullundhur overseeing three divisional postal units and XV Corps in Jammu and Kashmir with a DADAPS at the headquarters at Udhampur and three divisional postal units, besides APS

Centre and Records at Kampti and 56 Base Post Office located in the National Stadium hutments and three small postal units with Indian Peace Missions abroad in Indo-China, Gaza and Congo respectively. Army Postal Service was not an independent, separate Corps of the army; it was an affiliate of Army Service Corps whose insignia the APS personnel wore.

Sino-India conflict changed the situation and a lot of work was generated relating to planning and providing APS cover to new formations and units, obtaining volunteers from the P&T to man the increasing strength, their training and deployment, extension of APS cover to the newly raised mountain divisions and border roads units and some other para-military forces like Assam Rifles and some small Air Force Units. Assistant Directors of APS came to be posted with the Eastern Command, Central Command and Western Command and Deputy Assistant Directors Army Postal Service with two new Corps in the Eastern Sector. Postal Units for Comn Z Areas were created – both in the Eastern and Western Sectors. A second Base Post Office called 99 APO was located at Calcutta, initially in barracks in Alipore area and action was initiated to acquire land for it near Dum Dum Airport.

While still in "G" Block hutments, I made use of the time available between dropping my son at St. Columba's School and opening of the office, to learn French at the Ministry of Defence School of Foreign Languages run in "F" Block close by. We had a wonderful teacher in Madame Ehsan-Ullah, a French lady married to an Indian and I did my preliminary and advanced courses with distinction.

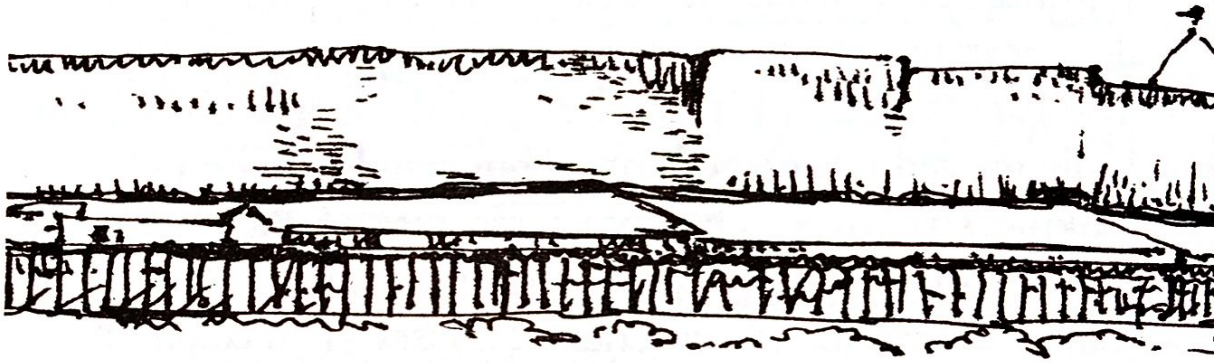
In course of time, our office shifted to RK Puram in a newly constructed office block and almost

simultaneously, I was allotted better residential accommodation at Netajinagar – a ground floor flat with well hedged-in lawn and space behind for a kitchen garden and a makeshift tarpaulin garage for my Morris-8. Multi-storeyed blocks of RK Puram were in the process of construction, dwarfing a small temple there.

I undertook a number of memorable journeys from Delhi during this period. In March 1963, I travelled by road from Pathankot to Jammu to Poonchh. The road to Jammu lay over numerous *nallahs* strewn with stones and rivers – the Ravi, the Ujh, the Bein and the Basantar. Jammu presented a disconcerting picture – disappearance of open spaces, congestion, insanitation. The Parade Ground in the heart of the city had been badly messed up, turned into a bus stand with an ugly looking structure. The forest reserves of Bahu and Raulaki – two of the three lungs of the city, had been usurped by motley construction of houses – new colonies named Gandhi Nagar and Bakshi Nagar. The bazaars were overflowing with milling crowds, creating a strange hum. Narrow lanes were littered with garbage. There were signs of affluence, particularly among the enterprising, go-ahead people connected with political power. The benefits of change appeared to have fallen to the better off, the clever and the unscrupulous. There appeared to be a certain crudeness and indecent vulgarity in the showing off of the nouveau rich, an unseemly exhibition, as of a victor towards one vanquished, of one who had prospered towards the one left behind, of a Kashmiri towards a Dogra.

Crossing the Chenab at Akhnoor, at Chauki Chaura, I saw a Hanuman temple and a signboard – "*Saavadhan, yahaan aath vyakti maray hain*" (Watch out, eight persons have died here). Nine miles from Naushehra was *Naarian* situated on high ground wherefrom I could

see the Peer Panjal ranges with the last remaining bits of snow. At Chingas, there was a *serai*, an inn with two large gates enclosing a courtyard with rooms in all the four walls around and in the middle a measly mosque with a *kacha* mud platform and on it under a berry tree, a mud grave reported to be that containing Mughal Badshah Jehangir's entrails – perhaps the most pampered part of his body that consumed the choicest of victuals and liquor. I found Rajouri town hedged in by hills all around, Rajouri Tawi flowing placidly, a *nallah* joining



it from the right and an old fort on the hill across the river. An ancient town, earlier known as Rajapuri, at one time a powerful kingdom allied to the kings of Kashmir and visited by the Chinese pilgrim Hieun Tsang as described in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini.* Road to Mendhar and from Mendhar to Krishna ghati was pretty bad with flowing streams without culverts over them and a narrow steep ascent to a height of 6500 ft. There were memorials erected to commemorate the supreme sacrifice of Major Harpratap Singh and Captain Manna Singh, with lovely views from the top and soothing notes from the flute from somewhere and the rustle of breeze through the pine trees. To the left was another memorial – a white *stupa*. Crossing the *Betar nallah* behind the white memorial hillock, I saw an observation post on a tree

and on the other side of the *nallah*, Pakistan-occupied territory.

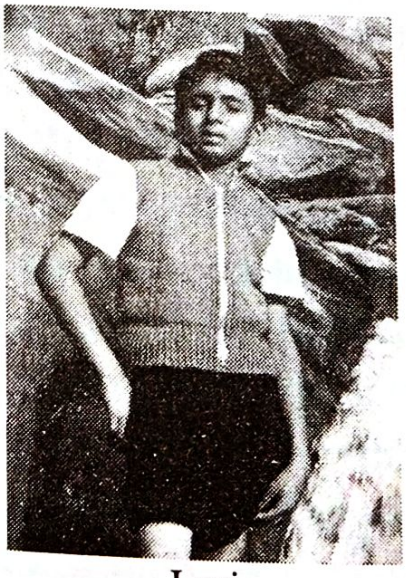
Later, journeys to Joshimath in an army jeep from Raiwala and on foot from Joshimath to Badrinath on the Uttar Pradesh (U.P.)-Tibet border axis, to Pooh on the Hindustan-Tibet road from Simla to Narkanda, Rampur Bushair, Kalpa, Jangi and beyond, to Aizwal and Champai in Mizoram in a helicopter from Silchar and to Kohima, Mokuchung and Tuensang in an army vehicle with armed escort through tea gardens in days

Bahu Fort Jammu

of insurgency were exciting, hazardous, at moments scary. Border Roads Units were blasting away mountainsides to make and maintain roads to the country's northern and eastern borders and were under Army Postal Service cover. It was the newly established Field Post Office with the Border Roads that took me to Joshimath and beyond to Badrinath. Journey from Joshimath to Hanuman Chatti, to Govindghat to Badrinath was very refreshing and exhilarating. Sight of *sangams*, confluences of rivers, on the way to Joshimath – Devaprayag, Karnaprayag, Rudraprayag, Vishnuprayag and the music of Alakananda embracing streams as it came down, was something to be treasured in memory. Visit to Pooh in Himachal Pradesh is memorable because it was made in the company of late O.P. Raghav, an old

friend from our probationary days in Lucknow, who was working as Director Postal Services, Ambala. A jeep was placed at our disposal by the Headquarters Western Command, Simla and we made the hazardous journey on a narrow strip of a road with the superstructure of the vehicle removed and falling stones from higher reaches flying past our heads and noses, down to the Sutlej river, loose dust flying into our faces when the wind rose in the afternoon, stopping at Dak bungalows on hilltops, lulled to sleep by the roar of the river below, picking fresh, sweet-smelling *banafsha* flowers from crevices on the hillsides for tea, enjoying the sight of snow covered mountains and the splendour of the sky filled with so many stars, luminous and big, which looked so near. Visit to Mizoram was occasioned by a note from General Choudhary, the then Chief of the Army Staff. Aizawal had a modern western atmosphere with young boys and girls smartly dressed in western attire, working in offices, smoking, swinging to the tunes of Western music on their guitars. There were bullet marks on the post office building. There were churches here and there and blue hills towards Champai.

In June, 1965, I lost my only son at Pune where we had gone during my annual leave and Lavi's summer vacation. This was my second loss and grief in the course of my Army Postal Service tenure, my father having



Lavi

passed away in November 1960. Our life was in shambles and Lakshmi was inconsolable, broken down, desolate. We stayed for a couple of months with Lakshmi's younger sister, Usha Pathak, at Kalkaji. I went for walks, sometimes towards the Tughlaquabad Fort, alone. In March 1965, I had walked with Lavi to the solitary *neem* tree among the strewn rocks behind Govindpuri and beyond to the Fort, crossed the fort wall, entered its precincts, seen broken feathers of birds, deserted dry wells with birds' nests, porcupine feathers, men with traps set to catch partridges, dead snakes. Govindpuri was extending and expanding in the rear.

Sometimes I went for my walks to rocky uneven land where Chitaranajn Park, a new colony was to come up after the roads and sewerage were laid. The plots had been carved.

On the first September 1965, I recorded in my diary,

"Evening walk was bathed in full bloom beauty. The western horizon was aflame with orange coated gold, enclosing a little lake of limpid yellowish blue. After a while when I looked up, the brightness had faded and the orange had a greyish tinge and had shrunk in odd corners and the yellow sheen of gold on the lake in the sky had disappeared. Back from the walk, I heard Pakistan radio announcing the capture of Chhamb and Diva posts and destruction of four IAF planes."

Throughout September there was almost daily blackout. No harsh jarring electric lights. Only the pervasive luminosity of moonlight and faded stars.

Back in our Netajinagar flat, we saw Lavi's things and broke down. We saw Lavi in the evening star, in a big black bumble bee that fell on his cot, in an iguana that emerged from the hedge, came near, stood and looked up with a tender expression and retired, in full

blown white fluffy *akk* flowers, full of life as it were, entering the room, in dreams, where he appeared as Krishna.

Slowly, we started taking interest in reading and occasional going out. Lakshmi turned to books like *Ramakrishna and his disciples* by Christopher Isherwood and *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* by M (Mahendra Nath Gupt). She also read Vivekananda, Ramana Maharshi and J. Krishnamurti. She articulated our state of mind at that time in a letter to her younger brother dated 14th November:

> *"The old Lakshmi is now dead and out of that dissolution a new Lakshmi has emerged ... I have no interest left in the transient phenomenal world. I am breathing on artificial means but I am alive in my consciousness. I have to experience Reality and I am born for nothing else. My house is a sort of ashram to me and whatever little I perform physically is my prayer while my thoughts are my meditation."*

I read books like *Memories, Dreams and Reflections* by Carl G. Jung, *The Wheel of Life* by John Bloefield, *Passage to England* by Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *Carl Jung and Herman Hesse – A Record of Two Friendships* by Miguel Serrano, *The Way of the White Clouds* by Lama Anagarika Govinda and acquired new insights on life. In April 1966 we saw three plays – *The Knack* by Ann Jellicoe at the Defence Pavilion, *Raja Oedipus* produced by Shombhu Mitra at the AIFACS Hall and *A Handful of Rain* at the U.S. embassy. In May, we saw Genet's *Maids* at Triveni Garden open air theatre. From 15th to 17th January 1967, we attended the 8th World Assembly of Spiritual

Regeneration Movement at the India International Centre auditorium and met Maharshi Mahesh Yogi for initiation in Transcendental Meditation.

On the 25th February 1967 we joined the 73rd birthday celebrations of Meher Baba at Sapru House where Begum Akhtar regaled the audience with her superb singing.

In March 1967, I was transferred to Headquarters Central Command, Lucknow. We despatched our personal effects in a hired truck and travelled in our newly acquired Fiat car, stopping at the MES Inspection Bungalow at Bareilly en route for a night and reaching Lucknow the next day. We drove straight to 7 Roberts Lines in the cantonment allotted to the ADAPS HQ Central Command. It was a large colonial type bungalow with high ceilinged rooms with *pankha* pulling fittings jostling

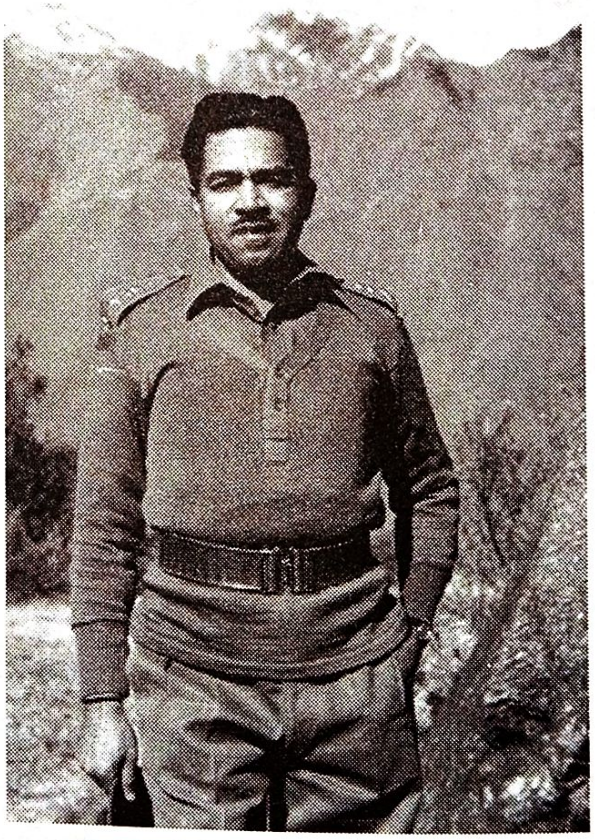
In front of APO Pooh

with ceiling fans, open verandas, set in a spacious compound with a number of servant quarters (for a cook, a bearer, a batman, a *chowkidar*, a *maali*, a *dhobi* and so on), trees of *bel*, *neem*, mango and rank growth of brambles and bushes at places which sheltered rodents and snakes.

Lucknow city looked faded, shrunk and crowded but Dilkusha, the cantonment area, was wide open and

neat. The old city had certainly degenerated – Gomati river looked more like a drain than a river.

My office in the HQ Central Command was very small. The Office Superintendent, Nb Subedar Subramaniam was an extremely efficient and smart young man who kept everything tip top leaving little for me to do. I remember fondly his beautiful smile, showing pearl-white teeth lighting up his dark face. As a part of my official duties I remember two of my visits to the troops in forward areas on the U.P.-Tibet border – one from Raiwala near Dehradun to Joshimath, Badrinath and Mana Camp and the other from Tanakpur to Dharchula. I took advantage of the visit to Badrinath to immerse the mortal remains of my son in seven *sangams*, confluences of rivers, en route. It was sometime in October or perhaps early November. I had lunch in the tented Officers' Mess at Mana Camp, a little beyond Badrinath Temple under the shadow of a high rising mountain overlooking the Camp, with Alakananda river hurtling and rumbling down from a gorge. I made



In High Mountains

enquiries about the mail and left on return journey around two in the afternoon when it started snowing. The Badrinath Temple was scheduled to close down the very next morning. Wet deserted road, hairpin bends, snowflakes raining from above, windless stillness and our jeep racing towards Joshimath. It was quite a scary experience and I sat tense, holding my breath, by the side of the driver.

The journey to Dharchula was made through Pithoragarh and Champavat and close to Mayawati where Swami Vivekananda was reported to have sojourned for a while and where there is a Ramakrishna Mission Centre and the place of publication of *Prabuddha Bharat*. I recollected that in 1952, these and some other places en route had sub or branch post offices in account with Almora Head Post Office. Places, which were mere names and dots on the map earlier, were right there on the way where gangs of Border Roads workers were blasting away for making the road. There was a surprise in store at Dharchula – the grave of Rev. Steiner and the graves of his companions, some sisters who worked as missionaries among the *bhotias* in the area – a small idyllic well-tended sanctuary at some elevation. Troops at Dharchula and en route complained of heavy delays in delivery of their mail.

On return to Lucknow, I scrutinised the mail transportation arrangements for APS mail on both the axes. I found that APS mails were sent forward under civil postal arrangements by private transport and there were delays whereas SDS transportation arrangements for official mail were regular and punctual. I felt that if private mail of troops in forward areas on the UP-Tibet border could also be sent by SDS vehicles, mail delivery would be expedited considerably. I visited the Division Headquarters at Bareilly where we had our Divisional Postal Officer, MB Phandari, an old efficient soldier who

had good rapport with the staff officers. My proposal for carriage of APS mail on Joshimath-Mana axis and Tanakpur-Dharchula axis by SDS vehicles, which operated daily regularly, was carried through and I had immense satisfaction in having expedited troops' mail to the forward areas in my jurisdiction.

In March 1968, I left the Army to revert to the civil P&T Department.

12

On repatriation from APS after eight years' service in the Indian Army, I worked as Director of Postal Services in the office of the Post Master General, Andhra Circle with headquarters at Hyderabad. It was a big circle controlling the Postal and Telecommunication services of the entire state comprising three territorial components, viz. Telangana, Rayalaseema and Coastal Andhra, except Telecom Services in Hyderabad which were managed by the District Manager, Telecom, Hyderabad. The Circle was headed by an officer of the Telecom Engineering Service, Mr. Ramachandani.

During my short stay of about six months in the Circle, I visited Vishakhapatnam, Srikakulam, Cuddappa and Ongole, the first three for annual inspections of the offices of the Divisional Superintendents and Ongole for an inquiry to handle a strike by P&T employees. At Vizag, I was put up in the Railway Guest House on the sea beach and enjoyed

walking along the sea coast, watching Dolphin's Nose and the turbulent waves of the sea. En route, I visited Simhachalam and climbed up to the temple of Varahavatar. At Hyderabad itself I was able to establish a P&T Dispensary in the P&T Colony.

In September 1968, I got orders of my posting as Director (Staff) in the P&T Headquarters at New Delhi. As I moved away, I remembered my visits to Golconda Fort, Salar Jung Museum on the bank of Musi River, the gardens, Lal Bahadur Shastri Stadium, Hussain Sagar, the Tank Bund and the busy bustling Abid's. I also remembered Muazzamjahi fruit market and seedless grapes cheap at three rupees a kilo and different varieties of mangoes, some with royal names like *Badshah pasand*, Pulla Reddy's sweets like *Jehangiris* (called *amritis* in the North) and I remembered Assistant Post Master General Hadi's stories of culinary extravagances of the Nizam of Hyderabad and *nawabs* and *amirs*, the Nizam's favourite *khichri* made of almonds cut finely in the shape of rice and pistachios in the shape of *moong-dal*, Nargasi kababs and different types of *pulaos* – golden *pulao*, chicken *pulao*, *gulzar pulao*, *noor pulao*, *moti pulao*, *chameli pulao*, *sultani dal* and *bagharay baingan* and the interesting story of the romance of Khair-un-Nisa, a high born Hyderabadi Muslim girl, with Major Kirk-Patrick, the British resident at Hyderabad.

13

On arrival in Delhi, we had to put up at my sister-in-law's house in Kalkaji for a few days until I got allotment of a two-room flat in UNCTAD Hostel, built after knocking down the old Constitution House hutments, on Kasturba Gandhi Marg. It was a fully furnished, compact flat, easily manageable. It was also very conveniently located, quite near my office in "Dak Tar Bhawan" on Parliament Street. Connaught Place and Bengali Market were at walking distance. Bengali Market-Mandi House complex offered enough opportunities for evening entertainment – exhibitions in Rabindra Bhawan Exhibition Hall, plays in studio theatre, open air theatre of the National School of Drama, Triveni open air theatre and later Sri Ram Centre and plays and music programmes in Kamani Auditorium. Sahitya Akademi Library and Reading Room in Rabindra Bhawan provided excellent reading material of my interest. Even the British Council Library in All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society (AIFACS)

building on Rafi Marg and the Society's exhibition halls and auditorium were not far. And for my morning and evening walks, the lawns spread out between National Stadium and Vijaya Chowk were there. I stayed on in this flat in Curzon Road Hostel for about fifteen years until my retirement from Government Service, during which period, I was president of the Residents' Welfare Association for three consecutive terms and was able to secure the large hall above Banjara restaurant for recreation activities of the Residents' Welfare Association, which included dance classes conducted by Saroja Vaidyanathan.

Director (Staff) was the controlling officer of four sections – SPA I dealing with cases of all the postal officers, Senior Administrative Grade Telecom Officers, general service officers like Welfare and Medical Officers and incumbents of other isolated posts and all the accounts cadres from Junior and Senior Accountants to Chief Accounts Officers (Telephone Revenue) and Deputy DG (Accounts), SPB-I and SPB-II sections dealing with cases of non-gazetted postal staff and personnel policy of the entire P&T Department and Pension section. He was also required to hold additional charge of Secretary P&T Board during the latter's absence on leave. Unlike other Directors in the Directorate, he had to deal with all the Senior Members and Member (Administration). He had to submit cases of postal officers to Deputy DG (Postal Establishment) and Senior Member (Postal Operations), those of senior administrative grade officers of Telecom Engineering Service to Senior Member (Telecom Operations), those relating to Accounts and Finance cadres to Senior Member (Finance) and those relating to Welfare, Medical cadres and other isolated posts to Member (Administration). He functioned as training coordinator

for all non-telecom cadres and served on different committees relating to recruitment in the department. Cases relating to the P&T Library also came to him. It was quite a heavy charge, full of responsibility.

Organizational structure of the P&T Directorate was similar to that of any other department of the Central Government of India with sections manned by Section Officers, Assistants, Upper Division Clerks, Lower Division Clerks and Peons, the only difference being that the Under Secretaries were designated as Assistant Directors-General. All the posts belonged to the Central Secretariat Service, except some posts against which officers of Indian Postal Service and Telecom Engineering Service were posted on deputation. The P&T Board was the apex administrative authority. It had undergone changes over the years. The Directorate General of Posts came into being on 2nd March 1854 with Henry Phillip Buchnan Riddell joining as the first Director-General. The office of the Director-General (Posts) was under Home Department from 1854 to 1879. Then it came under Finance and Commerce Department from 1879 to 1893. From 1905 to 1914, it was under the Commerce and Industry Department. Posts and Telegraphs came together on 1st April 1914 and Sir William Maxwell worked as the first Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs from 1914 to 1918. He was followed by Sir Geoffrey Clarke, ICS, who occupied the post of Director-General P&T from 1918 to 1925, and wrote, *The Post Office of India and its Story* – a very useful documentation of Postal History. Another British ICS Officer, Hubert Arthur Sams, who was on active field duty in the First World War in Mesopotamia published *The Post Office of India in the Great War* in 1922 and he held the post of Director-General P&T from 1927 to 1932. The first Indian Director-General

P&T (1934-1941) was Sir Gurunath Bewoor, known for Bewoor Time Test. Since 1942, the office of the Director-General P&T had been under the Ministry of Communications. The second Indian ICS Officer to occupy the post of Director-General P&T was Krishna Prasad (1945-1953). Prior to 1959, the Posts and Telegraphs Board consisted of the Director-General in the rank of Additional Secretary to the Government of India and Senior Deputy Director-General (Posts) and Chief Engineer (Head of the Telecom wing) and Joint Secretary (Finance) of the Communication Division of the Finance Ministry. It was only in 1966 that the status of the P&T Board was upgraded and the Director-General got the independent status of Secretary and the senior-most postal officer and senior-most telecom officer and Member Finance, the status of Additional Secretary to the Government of India.

All my senior officers including LC Jain, ICS and his successor NC Srivastava, ICS, NV Shenoy of Telecom Engineering Service were kind to me. I had a good rapport with Senior Member (Posts) with whom I had to work more closely. LK Narayanaswamy of the Indian Postal Service was soft spoken, trusting and generally supportive of whatever proposals I took to him. I remember the case of Ms. Kanwal Sodhi. She was an office bearer of the Indian Postal Service Association. One day, she saw me in my office and asked, "Sir, why don't you post ladies to the Railway Mail Service Divisions?" "Why not?" I said and processed the case of her posting to an RMS Division. Narayanaswamy had some misgivings about women officers working at odd hours and in sections in trains, but was ultimately persuaded to approve my proposal. Kanwal made a great success as Senior Superintendent RMS "D" Division and, thereafter, doors were open for other women

officers to hold RMS charges. We were experiencing difficulties in postings of officers to the North-East and Jammu & Kashmir. I suggested that if an assurance was given to officers posted to these places to be posted to their home circles after a fixed tenure of two years, we may get willing officers, particularly those posted on first promotion. Narayanaswamy agreed to my suggestion and asked me to prepare a memorandum for the Board. After consulting Senior Member (Telecom Operations) and Member (Administration), I submitted the proposal for consideration to the P&T Board. It was approved and, thereafter, we could get willing officers for these regions. I, as Director (Staff), had an open house, listened to officers and their problems. I even discussed with them possible postings keeping in view their problems and requests and the requirements of service. Earlier, there used to be an atmosphere of secrecy about postings and transfers. I introduced transparency in these matters.

Indian Postal Service Association came into being soon after I joined as Director (Staff) in September 1968. Till then, officers of the Indian Postal Service Class-I were members of Postal Officers' Association which had Class-II Officers also as its members. There was a Confederation of Central Class-I Officers' Associations and the Postal Officers' Association could not be its member because of its mixed composition. A common stand by all Central Class-I Officers was required to be taken on some demands through their associations, before the Central Pay Commission, which necessitated formation of an association of Class-I Postal Officers.

Formation of Indian Postal Service Association was a good development. There was a growing awareness of the managerial content of the duties and responsibilities of officers of the Indian Postal Service among them, which got crystallized in Part-I of the Memorandum

submitted by IPSA to the Third Pay Commission on July 10, 1970. Earlier, the emphasis used to be on their inspectorial functions mainly. In the IPSA memorandum, it was stated that Indian Postal Service was a cadre of professional managers who performed both administrative and technical functions with predominantly managerial responsibilities for running efficiently a national enterprise providing essential communication service which formed an important part of the infrastructure of the society. In addition, it performed agency functions on behalf of other ministries and enterprises of the Government. On 31st March 1969, it had an employees' strength of five lakhs thirty thousand and handled six billion pieces of mail. Post Office Savings Bank held 1700 crore rupees. It had a postal network of 85,841 Post Offices. A Divisional Superintendent had multiple responsibilities: (i) operational management involving speedy mail transmission, efficient counter and delivery services and extension of services, (ii) personnel management – management of labour intensive, low technology profile of employees involving recruitment, training, placement, manpower planning and development, promotions, motivation, disciplinary action, appeals, welfare, staff relations, dealings with organized Unions, (iii) materials management – postal stores, stamps, forms, bags, purchase procedures, (iv) facilities management involving hiring of premises, office layout, etc., (v) financial management involving budgeting, fixing cash and stamp balances of post offices, contracts, leases, (vi) investigation of fraud and loss cases, (vii) public relations and liaison with other authorities and (viii) philately. It was pointed out that the Indian Postal Service was the only Central Service where an officer was entrusted with independent charge in his

functional field immediately after the two years' probationary period.

I had a very fine set of subordinate staff under me – Assistant Directors-General K. Bharathan, R. Rajagopalan and GV Raju of the Central Secretariat Service, Section Officers Ravi Prakash, VS Rao and Kaimal and I learnt a lot, reading their notes and having discussions with them and going through ruling files and precedent books in which important decisions were recorded. Their notes were always well-balanced, pointing out all aspects of the issues under consideration. Everyone concerned recorded his views freely. While recording my point of view, I kept in mind the difficulties and problems faced in the field and grounds of human consideration. A large number of communications, to be dealt with in sections under me, was received from the Members of Parliament, All India Unions, P&T Circles and even individuals. Every communication received went to the relevant file and was disposed of in due course; no paper was ever lost.

I joined the P&T Directorate after the All India P&T Strike of 1968. Cases arising in the aftermath of the strike were smoothly sorted out. Before the strike, there was only one Federation of P&T Employees, NFPTE, whose leaders had leftist leanings and enjoyed the patronage of Communist political parties. The Director-General, LC Jain, ICS preferred to deal with one body. But, after the strike, another federation came into being – FNPTO – Federation of National P&T Unions of all the branches, both Postal and Telecom. It had patronage and support of the National Congress Party. I remember some of the Union leaders who came from all over India – Raghbir Singh from Haryana-Delhi, Chatterji from Bengal, Rajan, Gnanaiah and K Ramamurthi from Tamil Nadu, Adi Narayana from

Andhra, NJ Iyer from Nagpur, OP Gupta from Delhi. They met me sometimes in connection with cases dealt with in the sections under me. They always came with well-prepared, well-reasoned out briefs in their meetings with the P&T Board in the Committee Room in Dak Tar Bhawan and they put forth their points forcefully and aggressively.

A Training Division headed by a Joint Secretary had been established in the Ministry of Home Affairs. BC Mathur, an IAS officer of Orissa cadre of my batch was its Director, who took a great deal of interest in organizing training programmes for officers of the Central Government at the Indian Institute of Public Administration. I attended the first courses in "Personnel Administration" and "Administrative Behaviour" organized by the Indian Institute of Public Administration. Mathur played a pioneering role in establishing the Indian Society for Training and Development (ISTD) on the lines of American Society for Training and Development. I became one of the first members of this society. I had been taking interest in training from the time of my joining as Director (Staff) and in deputing officers for courses outside the Department. When the training division in the Department of Personnel obtained a Ford Foundation grant for some officers of the Indian Government to visit some advanced countries abroad to study training policies and practices, I was nominated to go from the P&T Department. I visited the United Kingdom, the USA and the Netherlands. I broadened the area of my study to cover organization and personnel policies and practices in these countries.

To the official agenda, I underpinned a private agenda – to widen my experience by seeing as many new places and things as possible and have a feel of the

western world. The agenda was pursued in three legs. The first leg covered halts at Beirut and Rome on the outward journey to London and the United Kingdom. In Beirut, I saw the Mediterranean sea coast swarming with tourists in swim-suits, an entertainment show at Casino de Leban, and a tour by bus to Jabil, a six thousand years old city; its Jeyeta Grotto in a cave full of ivory coloured crystal stalactites and stalagmites hanging from the roof, ruins of ancient Roman times, ruins of a stone fort, stone colonnades, an amphitheatre and several temples. The halt at Rome enabled me to enjoy a meal of Italian spaghetti and pasta at Hotel Alisio, see Byron's statue with some lines from *Child Harolde* on the pedestal front in a park outside the hotel and take two tours – one to spend some time in seeing St. Peter's Basilica with a marvel in marble at the entrance, *The Pieta* – Jesus in the lap of his mother and *Rome by Night* in a bus ride passing by the remains of Roman times, the Coliseum, the Forum, Temples of Jupiter and Venus, a Jewish Synagogue, houses of Dante, the author of world classic *The Divine Comedy* and Raphael, the painter, Victory Memorial to Liberty, the statue of Garibaldi on horseback and several fountains and beautiful statues.

In the United Kingdom I spent one week at the Postal Staff College in Rugby and three weeks in London. From Rugby I made a trip to Stratford-on-Avon and Oxford University. In London I stayed at Kingsley Hotel on Bloomsbury Way close to Byron's Court where English writers Dickens, Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield and Middleton Murray had stayed and breathed the air charged with literary creativity and intellectual vivacity. I had a vegetarian meal in Hare Krishna Temple. I saw almost all the places I had read about – Lincoln's Inn, Foyle's Bookshop, Guild Hall Library, the British Museum, National Gallery, Trafalgar

Square, Piccadilly Circus, Soho, Chelsea, Westminster Abbey, 10 Downing Street, Whitehall, Hyde Park, James Park, Queen's Garden Kensington, Buckingham Palace, Wax Palace of Madame Tussaud, old palaces of British kings on the bank of the Thames, Tower Hill, Bloody Tower, Jewel Room containing Royal jewels and diamonds, St. John's Church, the oldest church in England and Greenwich, the world's time regulator, in a boat ride on the crystal clear waters of the Thames.

London was a paradise for play-lovers like me – so many theatres and so many plays being performed at the same time. I trudged in the evenings to the theatres and was able to see seven plays in the course of my stay at Kingsley Hotel – Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* in the open air theatre in Regent Park, *Pyjama Tops* at Westminster Theatre, *Hair* at the Shaftsbury Theatre, *No Sex Please, We're British* at the Strand Theatre, Sartre's *Kean* at the Globe Theatre, *Jessie*, a Swedish play which had scenes of lovemaking and *Captain Brass Bond's Conversion* at the Cambridge Theatre in which the appearance of my favourite actress Ingrid Bergman drew a loud clapping from the audience. I also saw a film *The Language of Love* supposed to be an educational film in which there were explicit scenes of sexual intercourse.

The second leg of my journey covered five cities of the USA – Washington, Charlottesville, Chicago, New York and Boston with a day trip from Buffalo to see the Niagara Falls from the Canadian side – a straight fall and a horse-shoe shaped fall of water spreading a spray of mist over a large radius and an aquarium containing dolphins, sea lions and sharks at play. Washington struck me as a city of Memorials and Museums – "The Monument", "Jefferson Memorial", "Lincoln Memorial", "Air and Space Museum", "The Museum of Natural History", "Museum of

Technology", "The Smithsonian", "Fine Arts and Portraits Gallery" and so on. It was also the Capital City with the Capitol and The Rotunda and the President's Office and the White House. Charlottesville, with Virginia University where I spent 22 days participating in a Management Course along with postal managers of the US Postal Service and Jefferson's large house with the wine cellar in Monte Cello, was a lovely salubrious countryside with a profusion of greenery, rows of magnolia trees with shiny glossy leaves and blue hills. Chicago, the third largest city of the United States of America with Michigan Lake, very tall buildings, the tallest 99 storeys and the tallest in the world with 104 storeys under construction, subways, expressways and rush of traffic, the huge airport and the biggest Post Office in the world, Chicago University and *Playboy* office was bewildering. New York had quite a few things to show – UNO Plaza on the bank of East River, the Statue of Liberty, Empire State Building, the World Trade Centre, Harlem, Times Square, Radio City Hall with golden décor, Greenwich Village, China Town and three plays on the Broadway – *Butterflies are Free*, *Fiddler on the Roof* and a musical. Boston with broad open roads and an academic atmosphere with Harvard and MIT and smaller educational institutions like the North Eastern University appeared like Lahore where we had excellent educational institutions like my alma mater, the Government College and several other colleges.

The Netherlands experience with a week's stay there was very instructive and enjoyable. I imbibed new ideas – much ahead of those learnt in the UK and the USA – in training techniques and personnel policies and saw four cities – The Hague with its Peace Palace – the

International Court of Justice building and statues of the Goddess of Truth – stark naked and the Goddess of Justice – dressed up, Mudrodam – entire landscape of the city in miniature, and the royal procession of the Queen of the country in a golden chariot from her palace to the Parliament; Leiden with its University, one of the oldest in Europe, old houses, canals along roads, churches, small shops and flower creepers; Rotterdam the port city with numerous ships from all over the world flying the flags of different countries, radiant with lights after evening, a rotating restaurant on top of a building and Amsterdam – with its National Memorial and hippies collected around it, the huge statue of Goliath, Diamond Trade Centre and Museums containing paintings of Van Gogh, Rembrandt and others.

With the Netherlands, my official assignment was over. I had saved some money and obtained ten days leave. I went to the KLM Airlines office and booked air passages to five cities of Europe with a halt of 2 days at each place. The first halt was Brussels, the Capital of Belgium, where I took two tours – one of the city sights, mostly buildings including the City Centre and the European Common Market Centre and Lace Institute, 360 feet tall Atomium built on the occasion of World Trade Fair and the other to the historic Waterloo battlefield through the Soigné Forest with its refreshing air. My second stop was in Paris where I had a pleasant walk in the Jardin des Tuileries, lovely lawns of green grass, fountains and beautiful statues in white and black marble, Place de La Concorde with an obelisk in the centre and rushing traffic around, with a view of Champs Elysées and Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe and Palaces. "Paris Vision by Day" tour covered places like the Hill of Mont Marte, Galleries La Fayette, Notre Dame Church, Palais de Justice, Sorbonne University, Public Execution Square, Place de La Bastille and Voltaire's house. In the evening it was Moulin Rouge – the Casino

de Paris. I also saw the old capital of France at Marseilles where the palace had been turned into a museum. I spent some hours at the Louvre – viewing the exhibits including the famous Mona Lisa and in just *flaner*, walking on the Seine bank looking at bookshops and picking up a couple of books – *L'etranger* of Camus and a collection of French poetry.

My next stop was Munich where I saw the upcoming Olympic Village and October Fest which was very much like an Indian fair with crowds of people, fun and large wooden Munich beer drums.

At Vienna, the capital of Austria, I had an enchanting view of the Alps and the city tour took us to Schobrun Palace, Spanish Horse Riding School and Rose Garden having 64000 roses and Donorton with a revolving restaurant on top affording a view of the city – the Danube River, church spires, lakes, open air theatre, gardens and the State Opera House. In a tour to Mayerling where Prince Rudolph committed suicide, we saw a long narrow cave leading to a small underground lake and then a larger one where jet planes were manufactured during the Second World War. My last halt in Europe was Berne, the capital of Switzerland and headquarters of the Universal Postal Union. Sharad Joshi, who was working in the Universal Postal Union office and who after resigning from there, came back to India to start the Shetkari Sangathan, took me around to Lake Thun and Interlaken and Bitenburg and from there by cable car to Neiderhorn, 1953 metres high, to have a view of Jungfrau peak, 4163 metres high and other peaks of the Alps and of the lake view with sail boats covered with haze. From Berne I returned to New Delhi.

Back in office, I prepared a directory of training institutions visited by me and details of their training programmes for the Department of Personnel, which

was published by them as well as a report for my own Department.

My tenure as Director (Staff) in the P&T Directorate was a very fruitful and satisfying period in my official career during which I learnt a lot and earned plenty of goodwill and trust of my colleagues. I always practised what Prof Nihar Ranjan Ray called "personalism in administration," knew my subordinates by name, was aware of their personal problems and observed openness and a generally helpful attitude in dealing with cases of staff. As directed by LC Jain, Secretary Communications), I finalized a number of recruitment rules in consultation with the Department of Personnel and the Union Public Service Commission. I also took interest in deputing more officers for training courses and for assignments in the Central Secretariat. This created vacancies for promotion of some officers. I ensured holding of Departmental Promotion Committee meetings on time and tried to see that there were no supersessions.

Another source of satisfaction for me was my work as convenor of "Postal Study Circle" which met once a month after office hours in the Committee Room of Dak Tar Bhawan. The Postal Study Circle, an intellectual forum for free and frank discussion on postal problems and interaction with eminent intellectuals who were invited as guest-speakers, was an informal association of Delhi-based postal officers interested in professional aspects of the service and I received very good response from colleagues in the Directorate and in Delhi Postal Circle with attendance averaging thirty to thirty five.

Before I could complete my tenure of four years as Director (Staff), I was persuaded by S. Ramachandran, Chairman of the Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation, to join the Public Sector Trading Company as General Manager (Personnel and Administration) on deputation for a period of three years.

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I joined the Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation in August 1972. To start with, I looked at the background of the Company, its objectives and the Organizational Structure of the company headquarters office, particularly the Personnel and Administration Division that I was to head. The Company had been carved out of the State Trading Corporation on October 1, 1963 with a strength of 83 officers and 1128 other staff and a trade turnover of Rs. 40 crore in the first year of its operations, which had increased to 173 officers and 2113 other staff and an annual turnover of Rs. 260 crore on April 1, 1972. Its objectives were to develop export of mineral ores like, iron ore and manganese ore and to import and distribute essential industrial raw materials for the industry in the country. It was a part of the Indian Government's policy towards a progressive nationalization of the country's foreign trade. A sub-objective of the policy was the development of backward regions of the country by creating employment opportunities, in land transportation and port

development activities through financial assistance to private mine owners, State Governments, etc. There was no concept of support services in the organization.

Staff Union activities had been increasing, affecting discipline and causing impediments in the introduction of new concepts and direct recruitment at manager level and merit-oriented promotion. The Corporation had a more or less bureaucratic, hierarchical culture. The Unions were opposed to infusion of fresh blood and promotions were from within the Corporation, except for "some sacred cows" appointed on instructions from above. There were 13 types of Confidential Report forms patterned on the Confidential Report system in the Central Government. The officers formed one frozen group and the unionized staff another. Among officers, again, there were too many levels.

The Federation of MMTC Employees' Unions submitted a Charter of Demands on September 1, 1972 along with a notice terminating the earlier settlement which was current up to October 31, 1972. In the meantime, Lt. Gen. Khanna, a retired Quartermaster-General of the Indian Army, joined as Director (Personnel). Unions were anathema to him and he did not know how to deal with them. He did not seem familiar with public sector culture or civil administration. The Chairman entrusted the task of negotiations with the Federation to me with instructions to report direct to him. General Khanna obviously did not like this and created difficulties for me.

Within days, I formed the impression that there was more staff than justified. Yet there were demands from the Unions to create more posts. There was very little training activity and whatever of it was there, was ad hoc and unbalanced. My charge needed reorganization as well. There was a lot of work to be done and the Chairman had given me carte blanche.

First of all, I prepared a draft of objectives of the MMTC. It set out the broad objectives of the company and within these, specific, detailed and precise sub-objectives relating to (a) export trade, (b) import trade and (c) support services. I introduced, in the Corporation, the concept of "Support Services", which I had picked up during my visit abroad and exposure to management concepts and practices in the United Kingdom, the USA and the Netherlands.

The objectives proposed for Support Services provided for constant review of Organizational Structure, development of a progressive personnel policy including manpower and career planning, suitable welfare schemes for employees to foster a sense of belonging to the organization as a family, encouragement of healthy trade union practices, adoption of modern financial management and accounting techniques, building well-staffed economic and research and management services, legal affairs, public relations and communications units and a well-stocked library to support trade operations.

The draft was approved by the Board of Directors. Immediately thereafter, I bifurcated the Personnel & Administration Division into: (a) Personnel Division and (b) Administration Division, confining the latter's responsibility to housekeeping and maintenance functions. The Personnel Division was reorganized into seven distinct sub-functions, viz. (i) personnel planning, organization and personnel policy, (ii) training and manpower development, (iii) staff relations, (iv) staff welfare, health and sports, (v) service conditions and fringe benefits, (vi) discipline and vigilance and (vii) recruitment of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. These sub-functions were distributed among the existing staff, with instructions to each to submit cases direct to the General Manager, cutting out the existing

hierarchical bureaucratic system. Other Divisions under the General Manager (Personnel & Administration) were Economic Research & Management Services Division, Public Relations and Communication Division, Legal Affairs Division and Codification Division.

Fresh blood was inducted into the Corporation by recruiting technically qualified persons for Economic Research and Management Services Division, Geological Cell and Law Division. And for the first time since the formation of the Corporation, a batch of ten apprentice officers for managerial posts was recruited from the open market on the basis of a specially designed recruitment test. For this, an agreement was hammered out with the Federation of MMTC Employees' Unions, providing for promotion of a similar number of persons from within the Corporation and the same management training for them. The agreement provided that of the 50% to be taken through a test, 33% would be from outside and 17% from within the Corporation. The Research and management Services Division was strengthened with the direct appointment of an Operations Research expert and the Law Division with a Company Law qualified Joint Divisional Manager. In the library a qualified Librarian was appointed and a number of books on the subjects dealt with in export and import trade by the Corporation, as well as books of general interest were added. A small museum of ores exported and metals imported by the Corporation was also set up in a room in the headquarters office at New Delhi. The Economic Research Division issued regular weekend reviews and monthly mineral news. House journal of MMTC was also restarted. A study circle was started with Dr. Rameshwari Devi, Joint Divisional Manager in the Research and Management Services Division, as its convener. Work on codification of

manuals for Personnel Division was also commenced and completed in due course.

Training being my favourite subject, I obtained the Chairman's approval to get management development and training needs survey of the Corporation done by a team of management experts from the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta (IIMC) and Prof. NN Chatterji and his associate, KC Sethi, worked closely with me and made exhaustive recommendations covering recruitment at different levels, training needs of different categories of employees and performance appraisal system. After the establishment of a distinct Training Cell and designation of one Junior Manager to be solely responsible for training reporting directly to the General Manager, that is, me, and the receipt of the report of the IIM Calcutta, there was a tremendous upsurge in the training activities of the Corporation. There was both qualitative and quantitative improvement in training which comprised a mixed bag of training of very senior managers abroad, of senior managers in courses organized by Institutes of Management within the country and suitable well-designed in-company training programmes for junior managers and different categories of non-managerial staff. Training programmes were also organized in different regions. The number of those trained in a year shot up from 4% of the Corporation strength in 1971-72 to 16% in 1974-75. A review of the Annual Confidential Reporting system in the Corporation was also taken up. Under the new system, the number of proformas for reports was reduced from 13 to 3 – Form-A for Managers, Form-B for Office Managers and Form-C for other categories of staff. The new system had some innovative and important features like change of nomenclature of the forms from "Confidential Report" to "Appraisal Report", change of the period of the report

from "calendar year" to "financial year", introduction of "self-appraisal" form in the case of supervisory and managerial staff, provision for job description and appraisal of potentiality for growth and training needs.

In addition to the new appraisal system, a personnel data bank was created with personnel cards containing bio-data particulars, extra-curricular interests, training and development needs, etc. in respect of each individual employee. The whole exercise was prompted by a desire to build up gradually a culture of openness and the image of the reporting officer as a helper, guide and member of his respective team. It was an experiment that met with partial success during the short period that I was with the Corporation. The Unions demanded total scrapping of the reporting system and promotions to be effected by seniority alone. The supervisors declined to fill in the self-appraisal forms. Appraisee interview just couldn't take off due to psychological inhibitions and lack of mutual trust. The third innovation – training and development needs assessment – proved very useful. Another reason for the new system meeting with only partial success was inadequate exposure of the appraisers to any training in appraising; only a few orientation sessions with managers could be organized with the help of consultants. However, the new system could be a valuable tool in personnel planning for building up a climate of mutual trust and greater participation among all levels of employees and integration of personal goals of individual employees and the organizational objectives.

Consequent on the expiry of the three-years agreement with the Employees' Unions on October 31, 1972, negotiations were held with the representatives of the Federation of MMTC Employees' Unions. It was

a long drawn out, protracted, nerve-racking exercise. The Federation Secretary-General, Ghoshal and Joint Secretary, Chatterji, would go on and on with their arguments and I would go on listening to them with all the patience I could muster, serving them cups of tea and biscuits – the best that the Corporation could give. SR Kulkarni, the powerful president of the Port and Dock Workers' Union, was the President of the Federation of MMTC Employees' Unions also and he had direct approach to the Minister of Commerce in the Centre. A very good agreement was drawn up with several innovative features, providing, inter alia, for joint consultative machinery and a grievance redressal procedure to ensure prompt dealing with genuine grievances, greater participation of employees in decision-making at different levels and greater involvement of employees at the grassroots. Besides, a pay package was evolved with a fitment formula giving a substantial increase in emoluments to the employees. Following the revision of pay scales of unionised staff, pay scales and fringe benefits of managers were also suitably revised.

Besides the constitution of Joint Consultative Machinery at the All India Level and Regional Level, a Central Welfare Committee and Regional Welfare Committees with employees' representatives on them were formed for administration of welfare funds. In terms of the Agreement, some specific welfare measures were introduced in the course of the very first year of my tenure as General Manager (Personnel) which included a Group Insurance Scheme and an Accident Insurance Scheme, a scheme of compassionate gratuity to the family of an employee dying in harness and employment of an eligible dependent of a deceased employee in the Corporation, in relaxation of normal recruitment rules, loans for marriage and purchase of

household and recreational equipment and tiffin subsidy for low-paid employees. Liberal house building advances were given to employees which helped a large number of MMTC employees in Delhi to get DDA flats and employees at Vizag to build up a MMTC housing colony and so on. A holiday home was set up at Nainital where Corporation employees could go for rest and recreation.

With a view to improving efficiency and increasing productivity, proficiency allowances for proficiency in typing and shorthand and piece rate system for pay loader operators were introduced. Provision for lumpsum cash awards for acquisition of additional educational qualifications was also made.

Right from the day of my joining the Corporation, I had felt that the Corporation was overstaffed. A work study project was allotted to the Institute of Applied Manpower Research to determine the manpower requirements of the Company, evolve norms for different items of work and define job specifications of each position. For this, I had managed to get the agreement of the Federation of MMTC Employees Unions. I had agreed to associate Union representatives with the study team of the Institute. The report of the study gave job descriptions of various functionaries, suggested time factors for various items of work done in different divisions and on the basis of these time factors, assessed staff requirements, identified surpluses and shortages of staff in various places. It showed a surplus of 200 staff. 206 posts had been kept vacant. The Corporation assured the Unions that surplus staff would be redeployed and nobody would be thrown out. There was stiff opposition to the report by the Unions as well as demonstrations against me in Calcutta and Madras. My three-year tenure was coming to a close and I left the Corporation in August 1975 to revert to my parent Department.

My tenure in the MMTC was very rewarding and exciting and provided a valuable learning experience. By the time I left the Corporation, I knew a lot about Public Sector in India, Bureau of Public Enterprises, SCOPE, Company Affairs, minerals and metals and ports and exports and imports. Unlike my predecessors and other General Managers, I had deliberately decided not to handle any trade item which meant foreign trips, delegations, dinners, etc. I preferred to concentrate on support services, especially personnel.

I was satisfied with my work in the MMTC. With the support of an enlightened Chairman, who shared his background and experience in the P&T with me and who put full trust in me, I could experiment with some ideas and innovations in personnel management in the light of what I had learnt in the P&T Department and during my visit abroad and in the process, contribute quite a bit to the Corporation, through institution-building measures and innovations adopted in the Corporation, towards evolution of a management philosophy which emphasized that supporting services in an organization were as important as the organization's primary activities like production of certain goods, provision of certain services or trading in specified commodities and that functions responsible for the management of men, machinery and materials also called for attention and time from the top management.

During the course of my tenure in the Corporation, the Chairman deputed me to go to Tokyo to study organisational and personnel practices in three leading trading companies of Japan i.e. *Mitsui*, *Marubeni* and *Nisso Iwai*.

Japan's general trading companies struck me as a unique institution with multi-national functions and

global networks which served as antennae for getting every detail of the world's economic activity in different parts of the world and which were launching out on new functions, like, development of overseas natural resources to secure essential raw materials for Japan's constantly expanding industries; promotion of joint ventures at home and abroad; export and import of new technology; and promotion of future oriented industries like ocean development, information and knowledge industry, urban development and leisure.

These companies had a very efficient and modern communication system. The internal communication of papers between different floors and branches had an air-shooter mechanical system of pipes and flask type shuttles; the paper was put in a flask, which was set to the code number of the destination and it travelled mechanically to the destination where a red light informed the recipient of the arrival of the flask and the female messenger collected it. For external communication, computers and telex machines were ticking away all the time.

In personnel management, the companies maintained the traditional values of the Japanese. Male domination was apparent and a female employee with the same qualifications got a little less remuneration than her male counterparts and female employees were generally assigned the jobs in the lowest rung; organisation was hierarchical, feudalistic but each job was assigned to one man. The Japanese called it the "family-like" organisation and the General Manager was "Papa-San". Employment was for lifetime; there was an increase in wages every year; there was an elaborate appraisal system with separate rating forms for half yearly bonus and promotion. Bonus, which was substantial, was used as a part of the reward and punishment system.

The trip to Tokyo also gave me an opportunity to see something of Tokyo, the capital of Japan, to learn something about Japan and the Japanese and aspirations of some of the young men, go on sightseeing trips, have glimpses of some aspects of Japanese culture and beliefs and a taste of Japanese hospitality.

In a weekly, *Tour Companion*, Tokyo was described as "a monstrous city with many faces, limbs and tentacles – both frightening and fascinating." Two landmarks of Tokyo were mind boggling – one, "Tokyo Tower", 120 metres high observatory tower, painted orange and white, serving as an electric wave broadcasting centre, having three observation galleries from where one could have a good view of downtown area and of Mt. Fuji in good weather, a number of game parlours, restaurants, a wax museum and showrooms of modern science, a showpiece of Japan's technological advancement. The second was "Ginza", "the queen of Tokyo after dark", "a jewel box of flashy, gaudy, outrageous neon lights brighter than those of Times Square in New York" – centre of gay and glittering night life with several departmental stores, 1500 restaurants, 1600 bars and nightclubs. A country of islands and mountains, many of which were active volcanoes, Japan was a country of flowers the year round and a veritable paradise for children with compulsory education up to middle school. In a journal, the Japanese were described as "an economic animal", "an array of soldiers, disciplined, orderly, voluptuous, erotic." It was interesting to read the report of an essay competition for schoolboys on the topic, "What would you like to become when you grow up?" The response reflected the mindset of Japanese youth and varied from "Join Tokyo University" to "Get a job in Mitsui or Mitsubishi", to "Cultivate the company president's daughter and marry her to ensure

quick promotion", to "Take a mistress for company parties", to "Become the Director or Vice President of a company", to "Have a cabaret dancer as second mistress" to "Travel abroad".

During my short stay, I saw two shrines and a temple in Tokyo and made hurried visits to Kamakura and Mt. Fuji and Hakone Lake. The shrines were Yasukuni shrine and Meiji shrine, the former dedicated to those who died for Japan, with entrance through a huge bronze gate 22 metres high and a lovely park lined with tall oak and ginko trees between which were placed lanterns. There were open stalls selling toys, trinkets and typical Japanese snacks, a display of flowers arranged by masters of various schools and one thousand potted chrysanthemums near the shrine hall on the occasion of the autumn grand festival on 17th October. The latter was set in Meiji Olympic Park, the venue of Olympic games, visited by beautiful women in kimonos with newborn babies. Asakusa Kanno Temple in the heart of Tokyo was situated in a vast shopping and amusement area, with a gate having a large lantern hanging in the centre and a 200 yards long street with another gate to the temple, with statues of Nio-mon flanking the entrance and a pair of large zori sandals hung on either side of the gate. There was a bronze incense burner and a fountain of water with a figure of the dragon god, Ryuyin. People came, cleaned their mouth and hands with water from the fountain before entering the hall and rubbed ailing part of the body with the smoke from the burner, for healing. There were also white papers tied at various places, "fortune-telling papers." At Kamakura, I saw the enormous bronze statue of the Buddha cast in 1252 AD, 42 ft. high, face 7.7 ft., eye 3.3 ft., ear 6.6 ft., mouth 2.8 ft. and fine Zen temples including those of Kenchoji and Enkakuji, also founded

in the 13th century. At Mt. Fuji, an object of worship by the Japanese and Hakone, with five lakes, the natural scenery was magnificent. I could not have the experience of travelling by the "Bullet Train" or the "Sunrise Express", the *Hikari* which covered 514 kms. to Kyoto in just three hours and seeing *Sanjussangendo*, the hall with 1001 impressive statues of the Buddha. Nor could I go to Nara, a city older than Kyoto with its Todaiji Temple and 50 ft. high bronze statue of the Great Buddha and the Deer Park where one could feed deer by hand.

I had a taste of Japanese hospitality on three occasions – a banquet, a dinner and a tea ceremony. The banquet was a reception hosted by the Air India Tokyo office, at Okura Hotel for KK Unni, the CEO and Chairman of Air India. Unni was a former colleague of mine who had moved from the P&T Department to Civil Aviation on deputation, joined the Central Public Sector and risen to be the Chief of Air India. The banquet was a fabulous treat with drinks, food of all types and fruit displayed in front of more than a dozen kimono-clad beautiful hostesses and a large number of guests including Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh and Mrs. Rehman. The dinner was at Ozashiki Tempura – a modest wooden house where we were received at the entrance by an elderly hostess in a purple-coloured Japanese dress. We had to take off our shoes and were led up the stairs to a small room, made to sit on the floor with space to let down legs and served fresh prawns cooked in front of us. After a while the hostess's daughter gave us *sake* in very tiny cups and served shell soup and rice and vegetables, followed by tea and sweet melon. Tea Ceremony in Japan was an elaborate ritual and had three elements – (i) appreciation of tea things like cups, (ii) appreciation of the taste of tea and

(iii) formality. It was perfected in the time of Rikyu Sen, father of Tea Ceremony, who added two more tastes, *sabi*, age taste and water, quiet taste and polished the ceremony into the spiritual culture of Japan.

Before leaving Tokyo, I picked up three Japanese novels in English translation – *The Face of Another* by Kobo Abbe, *The Buddha Tree* by Fumio Niva and *The Sound of the Mountain* by Yasunari Kavabata.

On the return journey I got two short halts at Hong Kong and Bangkok. Hong Kong looked jam-packed with perpetual carnival atmosphere. It was one of the largest trading centres of the world, the greatest duty free port, where anything and everything, from ivory chess sets to wines, clothes, furs to Chinese junk was on sale; there was shopping everywhere – at street corners, back alleys, in "Cat Street", in "Thieves Market". I saw *Tiger Balm* gardens and grottos flamboyantly decorated in grotesque statues of dragons and animals from Chinese mythology, Aberdeen Village, a floating town with seafood restaurants, Shek-O Beach and Crossroad Tunnel – a mile long double road tunnel that links the island of Hong Kong to its twin city of Kowloon on the peninsula.

Bangkok was a beautiful city with temples like *Wat Phra Keo*, the private temple of the King and the Queen, *Wat Arun*, the temple of dawn with a central tower of 217 ft. 9 inches high with four other majestic towers on four sides, *Wat Traimitr*, the temple of the Golden Buddha and the more frequented Patpong Road with its abundant night life, mass of bars and night clubs interspersed with massage parlours and restaurants. A local *Namdhari* Sikh trader showed me and a companion, a massage parlour and a "Sex Service Centre" in a beautiful villa shielded by a mass of trees.

15

Back in my parent department, I was expecting to be posted as a Postmaster-General in some state capital. Instead, I was posted as Deputy-Director-General (Planning & Stores) in the P&T Directorate – a newly created post, "the most challenging assignment at Deputy-Director-General level", in the words of my senior colleague AD Pisharady.

I had three Directors whose work I was to oversee – (i) Director (Postal Planning) with two Assistant-Directors-General, one for postal development and one for postal buildings; (ii) Director (Mechanisation, Research & Stores) with three Assistant-Directors-General viz. Assistant-Director-General (Research & Mechanisation), Assistant-Director-General (Forms & Stores) and Assistant-Director-General (Miscellaneous); and (iii) Director (Postal Technical).

I wanted a cohesive team of officers working with me, who would feel involved in their job, would have the freedom to express themselves freely and come up

with new ideas and new proposals, assume responsibility for pushing them through and depend upon me for any help and guidance in their respective allotted spheres of work. Towards this end, I got each of the eight officers to write his/her job description and encouraged them to participate freely in discussions and exchange of views in what I called a "weekly communication meeting" held every Monday for about two hours in my room over a cup of tea.

After I had assumed charge, I had my first meeting with SM Agarwal, Secretary (Communications) – a very warm-hearted, dynamic officer. It was a very useful and instructive session. He seemed concerned about the Postal wing of the Department incurring an annual loss of Rs. 62 crores and wanted the postal officers to do something to reduce the loss. He said, "Compare statistics – total number of postal items divided by population – it comes to about 8 or 10 per head, compared to 500 in Sweden." He added that there was a total lack of perspective among postal officers.

Next, I called on Member (Posts), Daljinder Singh and told him about my meeting with Secretary (Communications) and his concern relating to the postal service losses. Member (Posts) said, "Don't talk to Secretary (Communications) about internal postal matters or policy. If somebody talks about post office losses, say that losses cannot be helped and tariffs need to be raised." He added, "You see, the Minister is supreme and if somebody writes to him for opening of a post office, a post office should be opened, even though not justified according to laid down policy. If the Minister cannot open a post office, then what is the use of his being a Minister?"

I was, however, keen to do my duty and discharge my responsibilities as I understood them. I had known Col. Brij Mohan, a work study expert of the Institute of

Secretarial Training and Management, as both of us were members of the Indian Society for Training and Development and I got in touch with him. He agreed to undertake studies on subjects like:

(a) Limited mechanization in post offices;
(b) Functional span of postal operations – need for continuing existing functions and
(c) Rationalization of postal forms and postal equipment.

He was also agreeable to run a course exclusively for us at his Institute on "Management Techniques for Cost Reduction" if our Department took up the proposal with the Secretary, Department of Personnel. However, Member (Posts) did not approve the idea of any such studies or training course.

With the help of my team of officers, I collected information on details of loss for each service, statistics of total traffic in each, revenue and cost of handling per unit, direct cost, overhead cost, etc. It was observed that the Department was losing in every postal transaction, e.g. 10.17 paise on each postcard handled, 5.83 paise on each inland letter card, 30.34 paise on each single newspaper, 37.92 paise on each printed book post, 11.78 paise on each parcel, 22.84 paise on each registered article, 98.84 paise on each money order on an average, 103.92 paise on each Indian Postal Order, 103.94 paise on each fixed deposit, 146.93 paise on each savings certificate and 138.68 paise on each Broadcast Receiver Licence issued. It was also found that cost of handling a postal complaint was Rs. 8 or 9 and the Department received seven lakh complaints a year and about 50% complaints related to money orders.

We, in our group, continued our discussions in the weekly communication meetings and formulated a number of proposals, but with the complacent and no-change mindset of the Postal Chief and the rigid civil

secretariat processing machinery committed to status quo, precedents and time-tested practices, there appeared little prospect of any change or proposal going through.

Expansion of postal network had been the most important component of all the plans hitherto and opening of new post offices at loss had been one of its key elements. This policy of opening post offices at loss was first introduced in 1928. Criteria of population and distance were first enunciated in 1943. The objective laid down was that, no one should have to walk more than five miles to reach a post office and the minimum distance between two post offices was fixed at three miles. Standards for frequency of delivery of mail in villages current in 1975 were those fixed in 1956-57 on the recommendation of a departmental committee. These standards were as follows:

Villages getting 30 or more letters per week Daily
Villages getting 18-29 letters per week Tri-weekly
Villages getting 12-17 letters per week Bi-weekly
Other villagesOnce a week

It was observed that considerable progress in extension of postal services to rural areas had been made. At the time of Independence, a post office served an average population of 16,134 heads and an area of 146 square miles. On 1st March 1975, it served a population of 4,686 and an area of 27.37 square kilometres. This was well within the Universal Postal Union targets for the Development Decade 1970-1980. But the development in India had been ad hoc and varied from region to region. Darbangha in Bihar, for example, from where a former Communication Minister hailed, had forty-five villages with more than one post office each. On1st March 1975, 3,52,927 out of a total of 6,38,478 villages got daily delivery; 1,51,199 got tri-weekly delivery of mail; and in 84,528 villages, the village postmen called only twice a week and in 49,754 villages once a week.

There were still 5,636 villages in the country where postmen called after a week. We in the Postal Planning branch put before us the objective of elimination of "no dak" villages and provision for daily delivery of dak to all villages with post offices in all *gram panchayat* villages. There were 1,29,889 *gram panchayat* villages without post offices at that time. Cost of a branch post at that point of time varied from Rs. 76 to 180 per month.

Progress on the postal buildings front had been slow. We set certain priorities, with preference for post offices with more than ten clerks, but these could not be adhered to. The funds available in the plan allocation under the head "Postal Buildings" were meagre. Decisions at the top distorted any programme of construction planned. For example, a major chunk of funds went for post office buildings in Madhya Pradesh, the state of Shankar Dayal Sharma, Minister (Communications) and there also, except for the TT Nagar Post Office at Bhopal, for a number of small post offices where the Minister wanted some inauguration function,.

After Manohar Lal Gaind took over as Member (Postal Development), I put up a note to him, suggesting reorganisation of my charge with the introduction of the Desk Officer system. It was pointed out that, under the existing arrangement, the Director (Mechanization) was not able to do justice to either Research & Mechanisation or Stores & Forms. There were 31 postal stock depots in the country and officers posted as Managers of these depots by the heads of Circles had no training in materials management. It was suggested that considerable economies could be effected if procurement, stocking and distribution of stores and forms were better organized and managed under the overall supervision of a Director. I also suggested that Postal Planning should embrace not only planning for opening of post offices, construction

of postal buildings and provision of RMS vans and Mail Motor Service vehicles and mechanization of postal operations as done so far, but the whole gamut of postal activities with a perspective for at least ten or fifteen years.

But nobody was prepared to tinker with the current Central Secretariat pattern of working and organization. Still, within whatever constraints existed, some useful work and planning was done in different areas, for example, several villages were brought within the ambit of daily delivery scheme in different P&T Circles, a good number of rural mobile post offices were opened. These included mobile post offices on bicycles, on ponies, in a *shikara* boat in Srinagar and on camel back in Rajasthan, a very large number of specially designed letter boxes that were planted in rural areas visited by mobile post offices and a large number of agents who were appointed for sale of postal stationery in rural areas. A decision was taken in the Heads of Circles' Conference held in early 1976 to take Postal Planning to the grassroots level so that the Divisional Superintendents were also involved in the process of planning in respect of their charges.

In the areas of postal buildings, mechanisation and postal stores also quite a few proposals were pushed through, like preparation of city-wise plans for postal buildings, introduction of machines in counter and accounting operations, installation of conveyor belts, procurement of sorting machines, etc.

When the era of Five Year Plans started in 1951, the First Five Year Plan had financial provision under the following major heads:

a. Expansion of postal network;
b. Improvement in transmission of mails;
c. Provision of accommodation for post offices and RMS offices;
d. Improving the quality of staff by training;

e. Mechanization of postal services; and
f. Provision of staff quarters, rest-houses, dormitories, canteens, tiffin rooms, etc., for the staff.

Subsequent Plans had the same broad strands and among these, extension of postal facilities in rural areas and construction of postal buildings received more emphasis than the other schemes.

In my view, till the Sixth Plan, postal planning suffered from three main defects, (i) it was an exercise at the Directorate level without involving the lower echelons of postal administration, (ii) it was not an integrated comprehensive exercise in accordance with principles of sound and effective management and (iii) the whole exercise was without authentic statistical basis and without a perspective for the future, totally uninformed by a long-term vision. The result – unrealistic targets, shortfall in utilisation of allotments and achievement of targets, particularly in the area of operational improvement and modernisation, fragmented ad hoc growth unrelated to a total approach, continued inadequacy of physical facilities and shortage of forms and stores and even stamps and seals, ill-equipped and insufficiently trained personnel and so on.

During my short tenure as Deputy DG (Planning) from 1975 to 1977, I tried to focus the attention of the authorities on these deficiencies. Series of Zonal Conferences of Heads of Circles were organized in early 1977 with a view to involving the field formations in the process of planning and to discuss the results of these tentative exercises. Some of the recommendations made after these Zonal Conferences are recapitulated below:

a) Postal Planning in future should be a comprehensive exercise linked to achievement of certain objectives to be laid down by the P&T Board. It should cover the areas of:

a. Operational planning, including expansion of postal network;

b. Manpower planning, including training of postal employees;
c. Materials planning, including postal forms and stores;
d. Facilities planning, including postal buildings and mechanization; and
e. Planning for new services and agency functions.

(b) In order that planning is realistic and meaningful, setting up of a Postal Research Centre is essential. It should consist of officers from different disciplines, like Postal Accounts and Postal Operations and Civil Wing (an Architect). It should be headed by a Senior Administrative Grade Officer and should be responsible for collection of relevant statistical information, consumer surveys, analyses of statistics and data, research in postal procedures, items of postal equipment, design of postal buildings and so on.

(c) There should be a Planning and Research Cell in each Circle to attend to work relating to collection of data and preparation of Circle Plans. The Cell should be headed by Directors in major Circles and by Senior Time-Scale Officers in other Circles. The staff support may be made available by regrouping the Planning Inspectors. The Cells can also deal with statistics and postal research in the field, studies of the present pattern of mail routeing and traffic growth, experiments in application of new raw materials and techniques, analyses of procedures, attitude and behaviour of employees, etc.

(d) A scientific Management Information System should be introduced early as this is necessary for provision of basic raw material for any meaningful planning.

(e) An exercise should be made to identify the staff who will be engaged in planning at the Circle level as well as the Divisional level and they should be given training in various processes of planning. Immediate

steps may be taken to include one or two lectures on planning in the training programme for Inspectors of Post Offices and RMS and a full chapter on planning in the training programme for officers of the Indian Postal Service and PSS and PMS Class-II officers.

(f) Accurate postal and survey maps of Sub-divisions and Divisions should be available to have meaningful planning from the grassroots level. Each division should have authentic information about the number of villages, population figures, literacy figures and other relevant data. The definition of the village for the sake of uniformity will in future be as per census records.

(g) Heads of Circles should be authorised to consult management consultants and institutions for studies in special areas of planning such as mechanization.

(h) At the time of inspection of Divisions and Sub-divisions, emphasis on scientific planning should be placed and the Inspecting Officers should ensure that the concept of planning is properly understood in the offices inspected.

(i) A set of guidelines for planning should be prepared and issued by the Directorate.

(j) While preparing plans for postal development in future, the state and local government authorities and organisations like the Chambers of Commerce and Industry should be consulted.

(k) Within the Circle Plans, there should be separate sub-plans for rural and urban areas.

(l) Perspective Plan: The Planning Branch in the Directorate will do an exercise in perspective planning for the next ten to fifteen years. It will be a loose framework based on the "Roll on" concept and the framework will be reviewed from year to year on the basis of new data becoming available.

Before I could initiate action on these recommendations, I was transferred to another post.

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Ever since my posting to the Directorate, Lakshmi's health problems had increased with rheumatoid arthritis and spells of bronchitis and she was not able to go out. My life had fallen into a routine – going out for morning walks, bringing some flowers picked on my walk in the Central Vista, driving down to office at 10 a.m. after breakfast, driving back at 1.30 p.m. for lunch with Lakshmi, back in the office up to 5 or 6 p.m., evening walk after tea, dinner, watching TV for an hour or two and to bed. Walks were a good antidote to the pressures of work.

When the Secretary (Communications) sounded me on posting as the first Director of the "Institute of Postal Research & Management Training" at Saharanpur, for which sanction had been approved, I expressed my reservations about going to Saharanpur due to my wife's health problems and inadequate medical facilities available there. I also said that Saharanpur was not a suitable place for the Institute and it would be difficult to ferry guest

faculty and senior departmental officers to Saharanpur from Delhi. I suggested that Ghaziabad, where Advanced Level Telecommunications Training Centre was coming up, would be a better place for location of the Institute. He agreed with me and asked me to make out a case for change of the venue as suggested and in the meantime start the Institute at Delhi where it could work for about six months during which period it should be possible to get a final decision on the venue. He also directed that the Institute should be called "Postal Staff College, India". He permitted me to have a team of officers of my own choice. Orders posting me as Director of the Postal Staff College were accordingly issued and I joined the new post on 27 September 1977 when the institution came into being. DM Misra, a bright, chubby officer, joined me as Joint Director.

The first thing that we did, after assuming charge of Director and Joint Director of the Postal Staff College was to prepare two brochures – one, on the role, objectives and responsibilities of the College, and the other, on the calendar of programmes for 1977-78 (December 1977 to March 1978).

The first brochure stated that (i) the Postal Staff College would provide support service to the P&T Board in the areas of management training and development, applied research and documentation for fulfilment of the organization's objectives; (ii) its own objectives would be to transform the present system into a modern management system by developing a dedicated management team and improve job and behavioural skills of the employees of the postal wing of the department; and (iii) charter of its responsibilities would have twelve different types of training programmes including induction programme for probationers of the Indian Postal Service, applied research and

documentation and providing leadership in the field of training of postal employees to regional and local training centres.

Preface to the second brochure said that the programmes to be conducted by the Postal Staff College would be characterised by: (a) innovativeness of approach both with regard to the programme content and methodology; (b) concern for the entire postal system and its efficient functioning in fulfilment of the objectives of the P&T Department; and (c) development of managerial skills and dissemination of management information among officers.

Simultaneously, the case for change of venue of the Postal Staff College, India, was processed. The change from Saharanpur to Ghaziabad was got approved at the Minister's level. The next task was to calculate requirements of land in the CGO (Central Government Offices) Complex at Ghaziabad and its purchase. V. Devarajan, Deputy DG (Finance Advice) in the P&T Directorate was helpful in allowing liberal margins in the estimated area required. Mir, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Works and Housing, which controlled the allotment of land in Ghaziabad, took no time to allot the required land close to the ALTCC premises. Mir, an IAS officer of J&K cadre, was the son-in-law of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, a former Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir and the son of a former Postmaster, Srinagar. He told me how he was spanked by his father when he pocketed a pie while playing in the Post Office one evening and got a spanking at midnight, when his father could not tally his daily account and found one pie in the pocket of his little son, i.e., Mir.

The problem of temporary premises for the Postal Staff College at Delhi got solved in an unexpected manner. One day, I happened to be with SC Mittal, an officer of

the Indian Audit and Accounts Service, who was working as Deputy DG (Postal Accounts) in the P&T Directorate on deputation and was also holding charge of the post of Secretary, P&T Board. I mentioned my problem to him. He said, he had a large room in Sanchar Bhawan set apart for probationers of the P&T Accounts and Finance Service and if I were to take up the training of his probationers also along with the training of Indian Postal Service probationers, he would give me that room and along with it make available the services of a time scale officer of the P&T Accounts and Finance Service, SD Saxena. Nothing could be more welcome at that time and I accepted his suggestion gratefully.

We needed a logo for the College. I had a friend, a Bengali artist, Duttagupta, who lived on the same floor of Curzon Road Hostel as mine and was working in the Department of Audio-Visual Publicity. I gave him the idea and he worked out a logo with the first letters of the Postal Staff College, India, in the shape of a pillar letterbox – a symbol of the Post Office.

We in the College developed a two-module sandwich-type induction training for probationers of Indian Postal Service and P&T Accounts and Finance Service. The objective of the first module of four months was: (a) to introduce the probationers to the structure, content and historical development of P&T Services in India; (b) to give them a grasp of operative rules and procedures to equip them to appreciate rules, procedures, techniques in the field; and (c) to enable them to understand the basic functions and roles of different formations and units in the P&T Department. The broad objective of the second module of two months to be given after the probationers' on-the-job training in the field was to equip the probationers for their managerial role in the context of job requirements and develop

managerial skills in various disciplines like, personnel management, financial management, planning, materials management, method study, etc.

The Postal Staff College started its training activities in the lecture hall of Advanced Level Telecom Training Centre and room No. 907 of Sanchar Bhawan. Between December 1977 and March 1978, two seminars on "Postal Planning" and "Performance Appraisal" were held in the ALTTC hall and induction training of six probationers of the Indian Postal Service and P&T Accounts and Finance Service was carried on in room No. 907. Reports of proceedings of the two seminars, prepared by me personally, were published in attractive format and copies sent to the P&T Directorate.

A three-day conference of heads of regional postal training centres was held in the last week of April 1978. Important issues like uniformity and standardization of training materials, programmed learning, tutors' manuals, training aids, training of instructors, principals and vice principals, gaps in existing training, local training classes, standardization of sorting pattern, training of LSG officials and inspectors, effective period of training, training in behavioural aspects, preparation of training films and job descriptions of different cadres of employees were discussed and recommendations recorded.

In the meantime, I had been able to get more accommodation for the College by exchanging room no. 907 for a large hall. And within my powers, I had got partitions fitted in the hall to create three rooms for officers, two classrooms and space for the Accounts Officer and other staff. Later, when the next batches of a large number of probationers arrived, I occupied a large hall on the 13th floor of Sanchar Bhawan vacated

by ALTTC which was shifting to Ghaziabad. I got it fitted with air-conditioners for the one-day seminar for Heads of Circles on 19th April 1978.

Sixteen Postmasters-General, including the Director, Army Postal Service, participated and interacted with two training and management experts, viz. Prof. Nitish R. De, formerly of the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta and National Labour Institute and Director, Public Enterprises Centre for Continuing Education and BC Mathur, former Director of Training, Government of India and Additional Secretary, Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms. Participants spoke freely. It was so refreshing and different from the Heads of Circles Conference where expression was inhibited.

Besides the training programme for probationers of the Indian Postal Service and the P&T Accounts and Finance Service, four more courses were designed; (a) a ten-week induction course for officers promoted to gazetted cadres of the postal wing; (b) a management development course for officers of 5 to 7 years' service; (c) a management development course for officers of ten to fifteen years' service experience; and (d) a senior management course for officers of fifteen to twenty-five years' service.

The Postal Staff College also changed the pattern of departmental examination to cover functional areas like personnel management, financial management, principles of management and so on. In training, modern and new methodologies like behavioural laboratories, transactional analysis laboratories, group exercises, case studies, self-perception exercises, individual projects on specific aspects of postal operations and mixing two or three levels of official hierarchy were adopted.

We in the College wanted to give to the probationers in the first module not only a sound grounding in basic operations of post offices and Railway Mail Service and how best they could be managed by a Divisional Superintendent, but also an exposure to a wide spectrum of intellectual and cultural fare. For the latter purpose, we invited experts in different fields like, Dr. Jagjit Singh, a Kalinga Award winner and eminent popularizer of science, to talk on "Frontiers of Science", Sonal Man Singh, a well-known Odissi dancer, to demonstrate her art, Jatin Das, a painter of renown, to exhibit slides of his paintings and talk about his art, Prof. Abad Ahmed of the Department of Management Studies of Delhi University to talk about transactional analysis and new concepts in management.

Programmes like a "Workshop on Work Redesign", seminars on "Staff Relations & Postal Complaints", "Management of Postal Stores & Depots", and an orientation programme for officers promoted from Group B to Group A were also organised. One officer each from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Cyprus, Nepal and Maldives was given training to suit individual needs.

I have always loved books and I went round bookshops in Delhi to select a number of books on management and training and general subjects and purchased quite a few latest publications to build up a good library and provide good reading material to probationers. I enjoyed my work in building up a new institution from scratch and setting out a direction to its activities. Preparation and publication of reports of proceedings of each programme was an important element of the exercise.

Above all, I loved to interact with young officers and probationers who were full of enthusiasm and new ideas. I carried out some exercises on self-perception

and their perceptions of their colleagues and the Director with them. Some of them were reluctant to open up, but eventually they agreed to participate in these exercises. They were very generous to me and used epithets like, "one of the finest personalities I have seen – bubbling with life, his eyes radiate an inexplicable charm", "a great organizer", "a father par excellence", "has a kind and affectionate heart and refined taste in music and art", "open-minded, is practising open door policy", "stern, upright with wide interests and seems to like those who have these qualities", "easily accessible unlike other officers", "has the ability to learn and listen", "has really created a very friendly and homely atmosphere", "dynamic, persuasive, intuitive, impartial", "gives our ideas a patient hearing, is none the less firm about his decisions and imposes them subtly", "has compassionate feelings for other people's personal problems", "is cool-tempered and kind", "a dependable guide", "likes discipline".

It was a large batch of over twenty probationers and I grew rather fond of quite a few of them. There was this young lady from South India with an urban background and experience of having worked as a probationary officer in a bank, who stood apart from the rest of them, very perceptive, cool and intense, a bundle of controlled energy with spirituality at the core of her persona and the potential of climbing the Everest. She did not like monotony, loved challenges and valued "Independence". And there was a young man from a village in Hoshiarpur in the Punjab, who had to leave school after doing Higher Secondary with 78% marks, who studied in a night college for his graduation while doing odd jobs and exuded the satisfaction of having climbed the Everest of a career by rising from the humble post of a Postal Clerk to a Class-I officer of the Indian

Postal Service. There was a warm-hearted charming young lady from Bengal who loved singing and sang beautifully. For her a perfect day was one on which she had no work to do and could sprawl in the winter sun on an air-mattress, read, listen to music, sing, simply laze and be in a dreamy trance.

Then, there was this sophisticated, smartly dressed young lady from Punjab, who believed that one got happiness and knowledge through self-awareness and self-knowledge and liked to have empathetic relationship with a few close friends. Her idea of happiness was to have a large and beautiful house with extensive lawns and many shady trees and flower-beds, get up at seven, stroll, have tea with her husband and children on the patio, chat, give instructions to servants and off to office and on return, have coffee, listen to the music of Jonah Strauss, dinner and to bed. And there was an equally smart well-built, young man who had read a lot of religious literature – *karmayoga*, *bhaktiyoga*, *gyanayoga*, who believed in *karmayoga* and astrology and quest for *moksha*, to be one with creation. For him, happiness lay in his wife making a cup of tea for him, while he read the newspaper and his two dogs – black Labradors – licked him and played around him leisurely. He would like to seek happiness in knowledge and have two daughters, one of whom should be an airhostess. The two smarties fell in love with each other and got married. I attended their wedding reception.

There were two young men, whose names began with "M", a Bengali altruist with a bohemian look who wanted to work in the rural areas of Rajasthan and wanted to be unique; and a Punjabi Sikh, who was carefree, full of fun and who said he did not worry if he had no pyjamas, there were people who had no legs. The Bengali "M" dreamt of a perfect day in having a

Spanish Colonial Villa, verandas, railings, patio, bougainvilleas, reflecting pool and tall dark ancient trees, while the Punjabi "M" dreamt of a perfect day in the comfortable life on a farm with little social concern, watching the rhythmic flow of life which was a whole complex of things – events, emotions, static scenes, cosmic drama.

There were others with variegated backgrounds and interesting ideas of a perfect day, for example, an ornithologist with a Ph.D. in Aquatic Ecology, Forest Service experience, who thought life was a mission, to fight evils in religion and society, who would love to go out, watch and photograph birds to write a book on them, return home to be welcomed by his wife for lunch and then have an afternoon nap; another young man, who thought life was like a flower spreading fragrance and beauty and who would like to organise landless labourers and open schools for orphans and settle down on an agricultural farm; still another simple looking, *pehalwan*-type with a broad neck, who said he believed in honesty and hard work, taking life as it came, joy and sorrows alike and for whom happiness lay in being free from worries and not being dependent on others; and there was this tribal youth from the North-East, who believed in service to men and service to God; free living and enjoying the pleasures of life.

I loved to interact with young people and would have liked to continue as Director of the Postal Staff College for the remaining years of my service. But, it was not to be. I was called up for a Universal Postal Union assignment as "Mail Routeing Expert" for a year in Nigeria under the United Nations Development Programme.

17

Deputation to Nigeria gave me an opportunity to see some places in Africa and know something about Nigerian society. In my outward journey, I had a day's halt at Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, where I took a round of the city and saw the palace of Haile Selassi, the previous ruler of the country and right in front of it different kinds of trees planted by visiting leaders during his reign and across the road, the "Hall of Africa", an imposing structure with a huge mural of stained glass, African lions, the city's old bazaar called *Pyaasa*, had delicious papaya juice at "Peacock", a drive-in restaurant and enjoyed a typical Ethiopian meal, *Injera* and *Vot*, in a homely villa, to the accompaniment of local music by a group. In the inward journey, after completion of my assignment, I stopped for a day at Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, had a meal with an old friend of my college days from my *mohalla* in Jammu who had settled down in Nairobi, joined a *safari* in the outskirts of the city and saw some animals, including a lion, in their natural habitat.

I spent fourteen months in Lagos, the then capital of Nigeria, in Ikoyi hotel on Ikoyi Island. Universal Postal Union project was already on when I arrived there. I had an Indian Postal Service Officer Seshanna and two British Postal Officers, Locke and Geoffrey, as my colleagues.

There was a car, with an Ibo driver Anthony, at the disposal of the project team. Office accommodation was provided for us in the Nigerian Postal Headquarters in Lagos. There was a young officer by name Henry Onnje bu Eke, of the rank of an Assistant Controller of Postal Services, as my Nigerian Postal counterpart and a lady typist to assist me. She was the daughter of some tribal chief and by virtue of that a princess, but her typing was simply atrocious. There was an office peon, a boy who got a salary of 80 naira per month and wanted to have at least five wives, but could not afford even one because the bride price had gone up steeply from a minimum of 50 naira to a minimum of 300 naira. The car to take us to office picked us up from the hotel after the morning breakfast and brought us back in the afternoon, a little after lunch. In the evenings, while my colleagues went to the Ikoyi club, I went out for my evening walks on the Kingsway to what was once a park at the end of the road on the Lagoon's edge. It was deserted and neglected, but had tall trees and palms with knurled roots washed by the lagoon waters. Sitting on the coiled knarls, at the foot of a tree, hearing the sound of birds and watching the waters lapping on the shore, small fish and other aquatic life, crabs in and out of holes, red legs, black backs, an odd boat adrift on the waters leaving a trail of ripples behind and green line of trees on the opposite shore, was soothing. Sometimes there would be a group of youngsters on picnic with music and dancing, at others some sorcerer performing

some ritual with stark-naked young women seated in front of him, reciting incantations, sometimes some left over of a sacrifice of a cock in the shape of its severed head and a red piece of cloth and at other times, some young black woman romancing with a white man under a tree. The hotel room was neat and comfortable. Food was good and wholesome – sea-fish or chicken and rice with some vegetable for lunch and some soup, cheese and biscuits in the evening.

Messrs. Max O. Urbahn International Private Limited, Management Consultants, had carried out, what they called, "the management audit and programme verification of current postal programmes, methods and procedures" under a contract with the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Communications over a period of six months and submitted their report on 19 June 1976 in three volumes. It was an exhaustive report, which listed twenty-eight tasks, relating to mail handling and mail routeing.

I studied the Consultants' report, visited the Lagos Head Post Office and postal establishments in Kaduna and Ibadan, held discussions with the Nigerian Postal Officers and formed my impressions. I adopted a system of reviewing the tasks defined by the consultants one by one and submitting papers from time to time on each of the relevant tasks to the Postal Headquarters with drafts of instructions proposed to be issued to the Territorial Postal Headquarters. These papers were eventually put together in Part-I of my final report. The second part, Part-II of my final report, covered my recommendations on mail collection and delivery, mail routeing and transportation and postal marketing and publicity. Part-II also gave details of major sorting centres and prerequisites for development of a mail routeing Plan for the Federation which required some policy decisions

like availability of basic mail circulation records, various means of transport available, establishment of an exclusive mail routing and transportation branch in the Directorate, segregation of first class mail from second class mail, introduction of sectional mail centre concept, etc.

The Project organised a Seminar for Principal Postal Controllers of the Nigerian Postal System towards the close of January 1980 in which I took a day-long session and a resume of my talk was circulated to the participants, the co-manager of the Project and the Postal Headquarters.

It was established at the start of the session that mail function of the Post Office was the most important, that it was a chain function with seven sub-functions from collection to delivery and that each sub-function in the chain was important. Then, three important criteria of mail efficiency in general, i.e., accessibility of postal facilities, speed of transportation, i.e., time taken for delivery and reliability were shown on a slide. Next, the state of mail efficiency of the Nigerian Postal Services was highlighted. The exercise showed that there was a big gap between the mail efficiency position as existed and the targets of the Plan. It was clear that there were many inhibiting factors which needed identification. The participants were divided into four groups and asked to identify the factors in the areas of (i) operations, (ii) personnel, (iii) materials and equipment, (iv) management and control, (v) finances, and (vi) any other factors, and suggest practical ways and means to achieve the targets and also suggest what role the Principal Postal Controllers could play in improving mail efficiency in general and in achieving the targets in particular. They were given an hour to discuss among themselves in groups and come up with their reports and solutions. They were also asked to indicate factors that were within

their control and factors that were within the competence of the Postal Directorate. I found the groups very enthusiastic and perceptive. They found the exercise very instructive and useful in classifying several issues.

I have retrieved a few entries in my diary of the period of my stay in Lagos:

June 12, 1979: I have a room on the fifth floor of Ikoyi Hotel with a view of the *gulmohar* terrace. The flaming tree is in flower. It is mostly cloudy or raining and the red flowers and green leaves of the tree look downy and lovely. There are many Indian trees in the hotel compound – *champak* with white, cream, pink and yellow flowers, bougainvilleas, *gulmohars*, palms, casuarinas, oleanders. Joy girls collect under them in the evenings, beside the parked cars, in the dark. During the day people sell *objet d' art* in front of the hotel foyer – ivory tusks, elephant paws, ivory bangles, black African heads, snake and crocodile skin purses, green and white beads. Occasionally one may espy a white lady bargaining for a souvenir, with a black chimpanzee on her hip like a mother carrying a baby, its arm on her back. English is commonly spoken, even by the meanest looking bearers and room cleaners. One has to wait long in the restaurant – a good way of spending time, looking at other people and there is a remarkable variety of guests – white, black, fully baked, half-baked, in flowing *agbadas*, *lappas*, skirts and three-piece suits even in summer with neckties and flowery headgears.

July 29, 1979: The hotel appears to be a wonderful place that teaches you fortitude, patience and acceptance of things which is a sort of transcendence over circumstances. How to wait patiently when in a hurry to get your breakfast or hungry for late lunch after office! How to avoid getting ensnared by the joy girls – aggressive in their soliciting,

entwining an arm in yours, asking for a light with a cigarette between lips and rolling eyes, or knocking at your door at midnight! How to manage for 24 hours with just two bottles of water! How to keep fit by doing 102 steps on the stairs when lifts do not work!

October 1, 1979: Today was Nigeria's National Day. The celebration was a combination of India's Independence Day and Republic Day celebrations. The military head of State, General Obasanjo (age 42) broadcast to the nation at 7 a.m. From 9 a.m., there was a parade at Tafawa Baleva Square named after the first Prime Minister in 1960. Two contingents each of Army, Navy, Air Force and Police marched, followed by 103 contingents of school children in colourful uniforms. Three aircrafts dipped to form the National Flag – green, white and green, followed by three helicopters and four bombers. A few tanks rolled. The General took the salute. Then the newly elected Vice President and President took the salute, after they were sworn in by the Chief Justice of Nigeria and President Shehu Shigari inspected the Parade. The function lasted till 11.30 a.m. The elections ordered by General Obasanju had been peaceful and smooth.

There were general elections in India and Lakshmi had interesting comments on the results in her letter to me dated 11th January 1980:

> *"She has swept all the cockroaches back to the gutters in all the constituencies with the broom of Congress (I) only ... Only West Bengal could resist the wrath of Kali and maintain its position. She could not remove poverty in India with a magic wand but has removed the opposition all right with* yantra, tantra, mantra. *Durga*

has destroyed all the existing Devilish forces with the help of her siddha *spear and this way the notorious robbers have killed all the thieves. The sycophants are jubilant and have already started worshipping the Indian Joan of Arc with garlands, sweets and bands with beggarly looks. The Devi accepts all the adulation with a look as though it is her birthright. The prices of many essential items have come down. Half or more of the victors are Sanjay's friends – loafers, blackmarketeers, smugglers, thieves, burglars, hooligans and murderers. Sanjay must have already become a father but the news has not yet been published; the child seems to have brought luck to the family. India will now have the real taste of dictatorship. Vijayalakshmi Pandit and Nayantara Sehgal may have to choose some other country to live in. For the time being everyone is scared and stunned wondering how far they will be allowed to enjoy their civil liberties. One thing is clear that her personality compels attention and commands obedience. Television screen is full of close-ups of Sanjay, Vidya Charan Shukla and Bansilal, etc. but she is outshining them all. All the TV programmes are in the form of publicity for Congress. Raj Narain has taken a pledge to grow his beard and hair till he is able to topple Indira government."*

January 25, 1980: Got the news of my mother's passing away from Lakshmi's letter received today. I had a feeling when I last saw her that she might not live to see me

back from Nigeria. I saw her vividly in a dream the other day. What a small tiny world of relationships – just two links with existence, just two persons whom I could call my so & so and so & so – my mother and my wife. Somehow I had the confidence that so long as my mother was there, nothing untoward would happen to me. Sometimes I wonder why I was brought into this world at all – for what, when I have no desire, no ambition to achieve or get anything or go anywhere. I was perhaps a whiff of thin air resting or rolling by some Himalayan cliff conjured into being in response to the prayers of my parents to give them a son, an heir. If it was to be a support to them, because they needed me, that purpose has been fulfilled. I do not know if there is a life beyond this body. If there is, I pray that they should rest in peace and bless us for the remaining days of our existence on this earth.

Lakshmi has sent me a photograph of Sunyata – he looks so much like my late father. Standing by the window of my room, I had a vivid view of my mother's face filling the whole vista outside – the sky and the trees – it just spread across and then something rose within right up to my throat and my eyes became wet and I wept.

March 22, 1980: Lagos has been in football mood, hosting the tournament for the African Cup of Nations matches in the newly completed National Stadium since the 7th of March. There were eight teams in the fray with flamboyant names – "Green Eagles" of Nigeria, "Black Stars" of Ghana, "Elephants" of Ivory Coast and so on. The "Green Eagles" of Nigeria won the final, beating the Moroccan Team. The whole city was on the roads, dancing and shouting with exuberant excitement. The Government of Nigeria has announced one Peugeot Car and one three-bedroom flat free to each player of the

winning team. However, the celebration has been marred by the "Black Maria" tragedy with fifty people dying of suffocation in a police van.

March 26, 1980: Last Sunday, there was a terrible storm with thunder and lightning and howling winds, uprooting trees, throwing them across roads, twisting poles, dashing cables, blowing away roofs, snarling traffic. It appeared as though some angry demon had gone round on a rampage. The next morning I found the noble, broad-leafed shady tree opposite Oduduma block lying on two parked cars with roots exposed and a jeep tilted, a shed in the Ikoyi corner blown off across Kingsway Road. In the evening, in the Ikoyi Park, I saw palms, casuarinas, eucalyptus trees twisted, torn and thrown down, banana trees blasted and the lagoon waters seething and hissing.

June 1, 1980: People one comes across in the hotel, in the park, leave, never to be seen again – the elderly Frenchman who looked like a Japanese, the hefty Turkish cultural attaché who had fondled the flesh of girls in more than half a dozen countries and found the Nigerian female flesh the softest, the Bulgarian with his pretty daughter, the American business broker who offered 5% bribe to get a deal through, my neighbour Dr. Ahmed of Egypt, Pakistani Mir, my colleagues in the Project, Alan Locke and Geoffrey and so on, leaving behind some images and memories.

The assignment in Nigeria was a valuable and enriching experience. It enabled me to learn not only about the Nigerian Postal System but also Nigerian Society and Nigerian and African literature. Besides the specific areas of my tasks as Mail Routeing expert, I also wrote an article about the historical evolution of communication of messages in Africa from very primitive means to a

modern postal system promoted by the British colonizers and patterned on the British Postal System. I found Nigerian society composed of various tribal groups, prominent among them being the Hausas in the north Nigeria with Kaduna as its principal city with the majority professing Muslim faith, the Ibos in the east with Port Harcourt as its principal city with the majority of Christians and Yorubas in the west with the University town of Ibadan as the principal centre, a large number of them entrenched in their ancestral faith in animism, superstitions and rituals, very much like the Hindus in India. There were chiefs and obas who loved to dress in flamboyant *agbadas* and colourful sequined caps, have a large number of wives and children and there were cash madams plying petty trades and flaunting colourful bandanas wrapped around their heads. People did not seem to have any inhibitions about food, drink, dress and sex. They exhibited a zest for life and the good things of life. There was corruption and bribe-taking and everybody talked of nairas, the local currency (a naira was worth fourteen rupees and a dollar equal to eight or nine rupees at that time). Hazards of sex workers, bride price and politics were freely discussed in editorial pages of newspapers. Status of a man in society depended on the number of wives and mistresses and children he had. An M.P., Taraka, died, leaving behind 253 members of his family and a hair-saloon proprietress put up a notice announcing, "I am the mother of Mr. Taraka's last son".

I found certain beliefs and practices of Yoruba tribal society particularly interesting – ritual worship of gods and goddesses, three hundred of them, worship of even a Rock with the sacrifice of a black bull, a black dog and a black goat, ancestor worship, taking the ancestors as functioning members of the family, belief in ghosts and witches, *voodoo* practices, sorcery, divining and magic spells and so on. Combination of polygamy and early

marriage of girls at puberty was intended to afford maximum exploitation of female fecundity considered necessary for group survival. "Proxy parenthood" on behalf of sterile husband or wife, a man calling upon a "seed-raiser" to impregnate his wife or a woman paying bride price for a co-wife, was common. According to the Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka, one of the finest products and exponents of Yoruba culture, African society was deeply involved with Nature. Man saw natural occurrences, rain and drought, changes of seasons, sowing and reaping of crops and birth and death – everything tied to natural order. He believed that whatever took place, happened to man and was beyond his comprehension, was attempted to be understood with the help of gods and goddesses and tribal society was linked to cosmic forces and gods and goddesses, divine powers supported man in his struggle for existence.

There was plenty of time on my hands and I made use of it by reading some books from the Central Library at Lagos and about a dozen books of African literature purchased from the market. I enjoyed reading David Stacton's *Kaliyuga*, narrating the myth of Shiva and Sati, inter-weaving it with the life of a couple showing relationship between eroticism and mysticism, *Life of Buddha* by L. Adams Beck, *Sayings of Mohammed* by Abdullah Al Mamun Al Suhrawardy and *Views from the Real World*, a collection of early talks of Gurdjieff. I read Wole Soyinka's *Prison Diary*, his novel *The Interpreters*, a collection of his poems and a selection of African poetry edited by him. The Nigerian novelist who impressed me most was Chinua Achebe and I enjoyed reading three of his novels including *Things Fall Apart*. I also read some more fiction, poetry and plays by Nigerian writers. On the whole, it was a very satisfying and enriching experience.

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After my return from Nigeria, I was posted as Deputy-Director-General (Vigilance) in the P&T Directorate. I found that both the Minister (Communications) and the Chairman of the P&T Board took keen interest in vigilance. Stephen, the Minister, read the files submitted to him and recorded long notes in his hand which reflected his interest in the cases and his legal knowledge. He was also interested in and quite concerned about telephone complaints. One day, he called me and asked me to prescribe a system of monitoring telephone complaints in Telecom Circles and Districts and their subordinate offices with registers to be maintained and checked to ensure prompt attention to complaints and reports of telephone faults. I showed him the forms, entries, prescribed timeframes, etc. along with instructions and got his approval. I also visited a number of offices of General Managers and Telephone Customer Service Centres in their subordinate offices to monitor the implementation of the system. I had to work directly

under the Secretary (Communications) and I developed a good working relationship with Ghosh – a man of few words, always to the point. He, like me, was interested in scientific management approach to vigilance with well-defined objectives, proper training and orientation of departmental officers posted as Vigilance Officers and those appointed as Inquiry Officers and Presenting Officers in cases of disciplinary proceedings. A statement of objectives of Vigilance in the P&T was prepared by me in consultation with him and my interaction with him on the subject helped in crystallization of these objectives. With his support, I was also able to design and introduce training and orientation programmes for Vigilance Officers and Presenting Officers. A programme for Inquiry Officers was already being conducted by the Vigilance Training Cell in the Directorate.

I had with me two Junior Administrative Grade officers – one from the Indian Postal Service, ID Shukla and the other from the Telecom Engineering Service, Parthasarathy, both of them very enthusiastic. The vigilance branch in the Directorate was well-organised with a number of Central Secretariat Service Staff, all well-versed in rules and regulations and procedures. The Vigilance Training Cell also had very competent officers – Director of the Cell, PC Gurnani, and an Assistant-Director-General, DB Khanna. They were thorough with all that was relevant to vigilance, including the latest rulings from the Central Vigilance Commission and court judgments and they prepared very good papers for the training programmes. These Central Secretariat Service Officers, practitioners of vigilance function, prepared not only papers for the new training programmes, but also a "Handbook of Vigilance in the P&T Department" at my instance, cyclostyled copies of which were supplied to heads of all Circles/Telephone

Districts and Vigilance Officers. I also got a "Handbook on Disciplinary Action" compiled, cyclostyled and issued by KBH Nayar, Principal, Postal Training Centre, Darbhanga. The statement of objectives of vigilance in the P&T Department and the handbooks were used in training programmes for Inquiry Officers, Presenting Officers and Vigilance Officers.

My general approach to individual cases of vigilance was officer-friendly. I had worked in the field for about ten years and knew that due to lack of proper guidance and helpful attitude of Circle Office or due to over-enthusiasm to do something new and lack of sufficient caution, some irregularity, resulting into a vigilance case, could take place. I, therefore, allowed officers facing vigilance inquiry, even at the preliminary stage, to see me and explain their side of the case, the circumstances and compulsions under which the irregularity had occurred. I did not, therefore, always support the line taken by the Central Vigilance Commission or the subordinate Vigilance Officer or the Vigilance Branch of the Directorate. In each case, I formed my own view. There were quite a few cases where officers who had acted in good faith could be saved from harassment.

On the Postal side, the vigilance complaints were negligible and of petty nature and mostly against Divisional Superintendents who were promotee officers. Complaints related to purchases of materials, misuse of office equipment, including vehicles, irregularities in conducting departmental examinations and expenditure on repairs. But on the Telecom side, there was widespread corruption and vigilance complaints related to irregularities in receipt and issue of stores, meter-readings, cable laying, tampering with the waiting list of telephone connections, printing of telephone directories and appointment of advertising

agents, passing of free calls, muster roll payments, recruitment and so on. I had occasion to go deep into complaints of corruption in Bombay Telephone District and Kanpur Telephone District. For example, in Bombay District, I found that there was corruption in almost every activity and Jauhari, the General Manager of the District, told me that he was not able to do much. He seemed to have a certain philosophy of two types of bribe-taking, i.e., one in which money was given by the subscriber willingly as "*shukrana*" and the other where money was extorted. He was in favour of ignoring the first type, because in his view, any attempt to stop a source of extra income which had become a part of regular budget of an employee was likely to create a management problem. The other type of bribe-taking, where the bribe was extorted, needed to be tackled seriously. He was aware and admitted that there was a heavy incidence of free calls in which departmental employees and outsider agents were involved and it was occurring in all the exchanges. It was a big racket in which heavy STD callers were identified, contacted and given the service at a much lower price, by disconnecting the meter-wire and other means, causing a huge loss of revenue to the Department. Then there was a heavy incidence of diversion of lines at subscribers' premises in multi-storeyed buildings by shifting STD facility to the STD-barred number. There was corruption in the commercial sections due to acute scarcity of telephone connections and long waiting period, in some cases 10 to 12 years. The clerks, head clerks, section supervisors, junior engineers and commercial officers were all involved in the racket. The General Manager expressed his helplessness in getting a clean officer to fill the post of a commercial officer. Union interference

over the years had instilled a sense of fear in the minds of the disciplinary authorities who were reluctant to take action. There was corruption in the areas of recruitment where records were fudged. There was also corruption in the posting of new recruits to richer pockets. Then, there was corruption in the matter of local purchase and local printing and money was passed in accepting below-standard supplies. In the area of vehicles, there was pilferage of batteries, oil, tyres, and tubes. The outside staff, i.e., linesmen, had a fixed "*hafta*" for attending to faults and those who didn't pay, suffered. There was corruption even in the planning section where demarcation of areas for laying of lines was done. And there was corruption in arrangements for flooding of cables to simulate monsoon conditions; terms of contract were diluted. In the area of stores, there was heavy pilferage of wires, cables and telephone instruments. In the area of employment of muster rolls, there was a racket; helpers sanctioned were only on paper. In the area of transfer and shifting of telephones also, there was a heavy incidence of corruption. A detailed note on my findings, suggesting twenty-two remedial, preventive and vigilance measures, was submitted to the Secretary (Communications).

Kanpur Telephones was a den of corruption. Even the District Manager was involved. When he was shifted and another officer joined and tried to do something about it, he was threatened and had to seek police protection for self and family. In Delhi, in Tis Hazari exchange, large scale corruption was going on and nobody was prepared to go into the racket. There was a serious case against the pleasure-loving General Manager (Telecom), Uttar Pradesh, who made his subordinate officers pay for his

pleasure and parties while on tour and closed his eyes and ears to the corrupt ways adopted by them to make good the amounts spent plus something over and above. The case of this General Manager had figured in the papers before the Parliamentary Committee on the Ministry of Communications and Ghosh and I had to appear before it to report on what action was being taken in the matter. The General Manager was a smooth operator with political and bureaucratic connections and managed to get away in spite of our efforts to book him, with intervention at the highest level. He was reported to have been seen handing over packets of sweets from Lucknow's Choudhary Sweets to the personal staff of the Minister at Amausi airport.

My experience as Chief Vigilance Officer in the Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation, a Central Government public sector organisation and the P&T Department, a major and important Department of the Government of India, gave me the impression that vigilance organisation was supposed to function only in terms of the definition of "Vigilance", as "a planned effort to uncover and punish corruption and bribery", given in Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary. There appeared to be neither any planning behind its activity, nor any serious effort to fulfil its role. It was a purely post mortem activity starting with receipt of a complaint about something that had happened and its investigation with a view to taking some punitive action.

I felt that "Vigilance" called for a management approach. This implied: (a) a clear and correct definition of the word "vigilance" and understanding of its connotation, (b) enunciation and promulgation of objectives of vigilance in the organization, (c) structuring of the vigilance setup to achieve the enunciated objectives, (d) manning the positions in the structure

by persons who have aptitude for the work and training for it, (e) a set of simple and clearly defined procedures, and (f) a continuous feedback.

"Vigilance" really means "watchfulness", "alertness", "*satarkta*". That is the universal meaning of the word and it is a continuing activity – keeping a watch like a *chowkidar*, pacing up and down, awake, a torch and a staff in hand so that the thief does not break in. This watchfulness has two aspects – preventive and punitive. The watchman will have the gates locked, the lights on and a whistle ready in his pocket. And if he notices somebody snooping around or moving about suspiciously, he will nab him and call the police. And it is not only the *chowkidar*, but the owners of the house also, who will be watchful and who will take all precautions against theft or burglary. Watchfulness at all levels – with emphasis on prevention should then be the connotation of the word and it should be well understood at all levels.

When I took over as the Chief Vigilance Officer in the P&T Department in May 1981, the first thing that I did was to draw up a set of objectives of vigilance in the P&T on the basis of the government's known policy and the pronouncements of the then Central Vigilance Commission, the Minister (Communications) and the Secretary (Communications). The objectives underlined a balance between preventive and punitive aspects of vigilance with greater emphasis on prevention by administrative and technological reform, system improvement and identification of persons, positions and opportunities susceptible to corruption, and condoning honest mistakes to encourage initiative and innovation.

After they were approved by the Minister (Communications), they were promulgated and communicated to all concerned.

After the objectives were finalised and promulgated, the next step was to have a look at the vigilance setup with a view to streamlining and strengthening it so that it became an efficient tool for the achievement of objectives. In the P&T Department, every Postal Circle, Telephone District and Telecom Circle had a Vigilance Officer. In the metro Telephone Districts, creation of flying squads had been very helpful in detecting cases of telephone revenue leakages and some other malpractices. Once a subscriber of Jangpura in New Delhi rang up the Director-General's office that he had caught a linesman diverting his telephone line from the telephone pole behind his house. The flying squad was rushed to the subscriber's residence, the linesman was caught and immediate investigation and disciplinary action against him initiated. In Delhi Postal Circle considerable leakage of revenue was stopped by checking bulk postings at different post offices.

Since officers for vigilance work had to be picked up from within the Organization, the first thing to be seen was whether the officer picked up had the aptitude and enthusiasm for the type of work before him. Another consideration could be his or her experience in investigation of complaints and general knowledge of the working of the Organisation and an inquiring, curious, critical mind. It was emphasized that after selection, the officer must be given a brief orientation course, a short training. Vigilance had its own specialisation, its technicalities and a short course of training was expected to go a long way in equipping the officer for the post. In the course of my inspection visits, I saw that in some Circles, there were Vigilance Officers who did not know how to prepare the quarterly vigilance statements in respect of their units, Vigilance Officers who did not know how to scrutinize a draft charge sheet and others who did not

know the common precautions to be taken in holding inquiries under Central Civil Service (Classification Control and Appeal) Rules. In the P&T, a Training Cell organised orientation training to Vigilance Officers and regular training classes for Inquiry Officers and Presenting Officers, to ensure that the punitive aspect of vigilance did not suffer.

Discipline, morale, efficiency and smooth working of the vigilance branch also suffered if rules, procedures, instructions and the latest case-law material were not available. For proper management of the vigilance function, it was necessary to have the procedures and practices and instructions codified in the shape of handy manuals, which should be available to vigilance staff for reference. Besides the vigilance manuals brought out by the Central Vigilance Commission, supplementary manuals relating to P&T were got ready. They contained very useful information about the vigilance organisation in the Department, the role and function of various functionaries at different levels and types of cases and their modus operandi which were peculiar to different wings of the Department, like Postal, Telephones, Telegraphs, Telex and Civil Works. It pinpointed the vulnerable areas for preventive action.

Management approach to an activity, like vigilance, also envisaged an effective and efficient feedback system, either through properly designed meaningful reports and returns or a more sophisticated Management Information System (MIS), by frequent visits and inspections of subordinate units and by periodical discussions with subordinate Vigilance Officers and Controlling Officers of units. Management approach is a dynamic approach as opposed to a static bureaucratic approach. In the light of feedback, changes could be effected and new strategies

devised so that corruption was curtailed and prevented to the extent possible. Since external factors were getting stronger, there was greater need for managerial control over internal factors.

Last, but not the least, an important element in the management approach to vigilance was the commitment of the top management to effective implementation of this approach and active support to the Chief Vigilance Officer in the organization.

My experience of working as a Chief Vigilance Officer enabled me to prepare a paper on "Management Approach to Vigilance in Central Government" which was published in the journal brought out by the Administrative Reforms Department of the Home Ministry and which I used in a couple of sessions I took in a course for Chief Vigilance Officers at the Indian Institute of Public Administration.

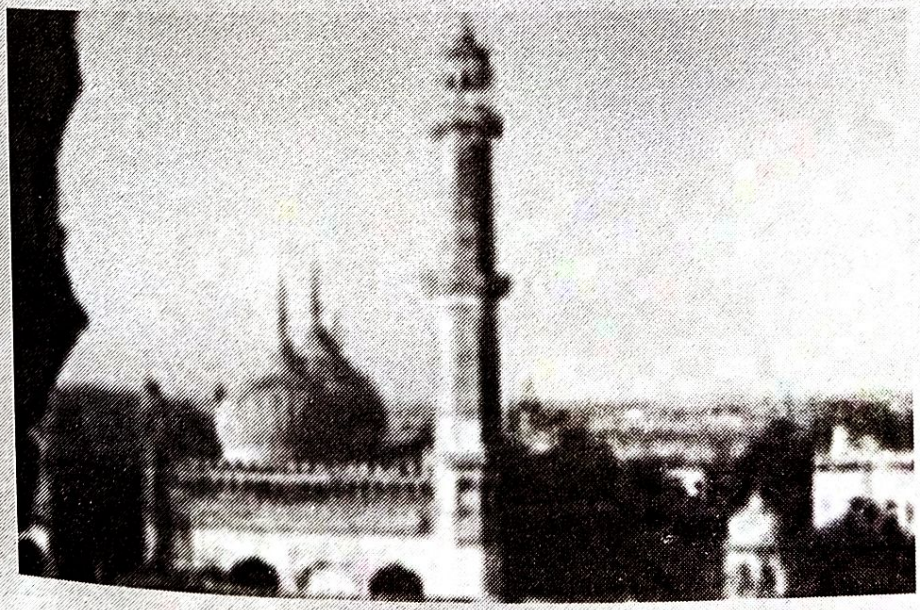
19

I had three months of service left before superannuation, when I was posted as Member (Postal Development & Agency Functions). The period was too short – from 1st December, 1982 to 28th February, 1983 and I remember very little of it, except two meetings – one, of officers under my charge in my room in Sanchar Bhawan and the other, of the P&T Board. In the meeting with my officers, I remember to have requested them to: (i) monitor and report progress in achievement of Postal Plan targets for the year and (ii) prepare and submit memos for the P&T Board on important policy issues in their respective areas.

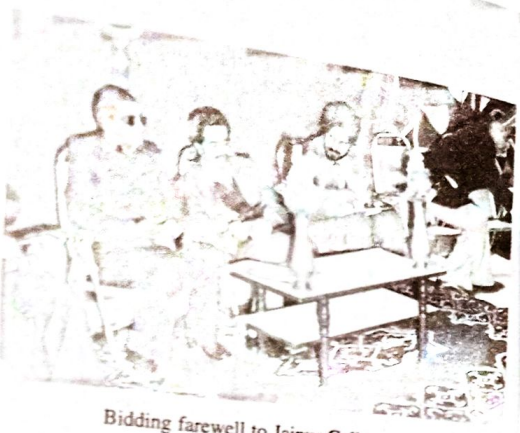
The result of monitoring of Plan targets under different heads, particularly, expansion of postal network in rural, tribal and backward areas by opening new post offices, installation of additional letter boxes, bringing more villages under the scheme of daily delivery and rural mobile post offices and appointment of additional delivery agents, was satisfactory.

There was only one meeting of the P&T Board during my short tenure. A memo on mechanisation and modernisation of postal services prepared by Shamsur Rehman Farooqi (who had made valuable contributions to Urdu literature while still in service and who got the prestigious *Saraswati Samman* for his book of criticism *Sheyar-e-Shor-Angez* after his retirement) came up before the Board. All my colleagues in the Board supported the proposal. The progress in the area of mechanization and modernisation of postal services had been very tardy that far. I retired from service on 28th February 1983 with some satisfaction that with the approval of the proposals in the memo, faster development in the area would take place.

At Ajmer Sharif



Imambara, Lucknow



Bidding farewell to Jaipur Colleagues

With Coleagues at Jaipur

On Duty

At Lagos with officers of Nigerian Postal Admnistration.

Memorable Moments With Lavi

20

After retirement, I had no need or desire for paid work. Instead, I wanted to devote my well-earned leisure years of retired life in meditation, self-enquiry, *sva-darshan* in *sva-lila* in the words of my Danish mystic friend Sunyata who had since been taken away to Mill Valley in the United States of America. J. Krishnamurti's writings and lectures and reading of books like *The Gospel of Ramakrishna*, *Who Am I?* and *I Am That*, containing the teachings of Ramana Maharshi and Nisarga Dutt Maharaj respectively made me lean in that direction. I had also met Maharshi Mahesh Yogi and taken initiation in "Transcendental Meditation" – a technique in which you sat quietly for twenty minutes daily, repeating the name of your favourite deity, watching the emergence of each thought, going with it without attempting to control it, coming back to the name and so on and on. The daily practice was expected to allow the mind to settle down to its self-referral state and to provide direct experience of the unified field, the field of pure intelligence. It was also

expected to result in increased cardio-vascular efficiency, reduced metabolic rate, increased synchronisation and balance and coherence between brain areas, reversal of biological age, increased stability of nervous system, normalisation of high blood pressure, improved sleep and increased concentration. From Vethathiri Maharshi of "SKY" fame, I had learned the practice of "Simplified *Kundalini* Yoga" – feeling vibrations at *agyachakra*, but I wondered whether it was really *kundalini shakti* brought up from *mooladhara chakra* to *agyachakra* or just an imagined feeling. J. Krishnamurti made fun of such practices. According to him, "meditation" meant "complete attention" to whatever one did, living in the moment. This appealed to me more. And there were things to be done through the day, a certain routine which one did mechanically, daily chores and some work or the other that came one's way.

Work came to me unsolicited. In the very month of my retirement, i.e. February 1983, I was invited to the first meeting of the newly constituted General Council of the Sahitya Akademi, the National Academy of Letters and in the meeting, I was elected as the Convenor for Dogri and a member of the Executive Board of the Akademi for five years. Others elected were eminent writers of different Indian languages – Prof. V.K. Gokak, writer in Kannada and English and a former Vice-Chancellor of a couple of universities, Biren Bhattacharya, Assamese writer and recipient of the Bharatiya Gyanpeeth Award, B. Gopala Reddy, Telugu writer who had been a Chief Minister of Andhra, a Governor of Uttar Pradesh and a member of the Central Council of Ministers, O.N.V. Kurup, a renowned Malayalam poet, Gangadhar Gadgil, a very respected Marathi writer, Prof. Gopi Chand Narang, an Urdu

scholar, Vishnu Prabhakar, a Hindi writer whose *Aawaara Masiha* on the life of Bengali fiction writer Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya had been a great hit, Punjabi poetess Prabhjot Kaur, Gujarati fiction writer Gulab Das Broker, Oriya writer J.M. Mohanty, Rajasthani writer Hiralal Maheshwari and Sanskrit and Hindi writer Vidya Niwas Misra. I was no writer, my only contribution to literature being "A Short History of Dogri Literature" just one book and yearly survey articles on Dogri writings of the year since 1971. However, I did not feel overawed by literary stalwarts. Instead, I felt interested in and impressed by their creative energy and my wide reading of literature enabled me to interact intelligently with them.

Prof. Gokak, who was elected President of the Akademi, was not only a respected academic and writer but also a good administrator who recognised the strong points of his colleagues in the Executive Board. He appreciated my administrative experience and entrusted a bundle of complaints by Vishnu Khare, a Deputy Secretary of the Akademi, against Dr. Kelkar, the Secretary of the Akademi, for enquiry and put me on various important committees, e.g. the Planning Committee, the Committee set up to lay down conditions for recognition of languages, the Committee on Integrated History of Indian Literature, the Committee for making recommendations for Comparative Study of Literature, the Selection Committees for appointments in the Akademi and so on. All these kept me fairly occupied and I familiarised myself not only with the Constitution and Rules of the Akademi but also with the staff at different levels.

In March 1983, Prof. N.N. Chatterji, formerly of the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta called for my bio-data and invited me to breakfast at his wife Prof.

Margaret Chatterji's flat at Probyn Road, Delhi University. He told me about a research project he had taken up – preparation of a book on "Achievers – Success Stories in the Management of Human Resources from Twenty Large Private and Public Enterprises in India" in which he wanted to narrate how in these enterprises, senior personnel managers had established harmonious relations with Staff Unions, colleagues and subordinate staff and people in the connected organisations and how they had solved critical personnel problems in their respective enterprises. He said he had been greatly impressed by my performance in the Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation and wanted to include me among the twenty achievers. Unfortunately, cancer took him away before he could complete the project.

The next three years or so kept me fairly occupied in three important projects of the Sahitya Akademi – *An Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature* being edited by its Chief Editor Prof. Amaresh Datta, *An Integrated History of Indian Literature – 1800-1910* to be written by Prof. Sisir Kumar Das of Delhi University and *An Anthology of Modern Indian Literature – 1800-1975* being edited by Prof. K.M. George. I, being the editor for Dogri in all the three projects, had to collect information, chase scholars for entries, write some entries myself, translate entries in vernacular into English and edit all the matter. It was quite taxing but I enjoyed doing it. The exercises were important and involved the delicate task of placing an underdeveloped Dogri literature alongside developed literatures of languages like Bengali, Marathi, Malayalam, Kannada and Hindi. I had also to obtain all publications of Dogri for my yearly survey articles. Thus I built up a small library of Dogri books at my residence.

1984 was an ill-starred year for us. With the onset of rains, Lakshmi developed lung congestion and

recurrent nagging cough. Antibiotics did not help and I had to get her admitted to the Holy Family Hospital. On the evening of 3rd September, there was a very heavy downpour, thick threads of rain linking the sky and the earth and flooding roads and the parking area of the hospital as well. I drove in the rain to fetch her physician Dr. K. P. Mathur from his Lodi Road residence and later after midnight I dragged her attending doctor from his residence. Expressions on their faces betrayed fears for the worst. Early in the pre-dawn hour of the 4th, Lakshmi was helped to sit up against the pillows and given a sip of water, a drop of which trickled down to her chin. She motioned to me to wipe it and hold her hand. And with her hand in mine, she stopped breathing. Thus she entered the house of death living and alert, with her consciousness in perfect order, like a great noble vessel sinking quietly into the deep, with all its lights shining. As she passed on, she appeared to expand and fill the whole space and merge into the sky and spread on all sides right up to the horizon. It was the end of a thirty-four-years-long relationship. I was left wondering whether she who was so pure and divine by nature and a unique personality with a live wire mind of her own, with verbal vigour and rich armoury of words, was an emanation of Shakti.

Lakshmi & Lavi

There were condolence messages from Dogra Himachal Sanskriti Sangam, Delhi and Dogri Samstha, Jammu, from Dr. Karan Singh and Prof. V.K. Gokak, from Sansar Chandji who was a member of my marriage party in 1950 and who called Lakshmi "an intellectual giant", some Dogri writers and the doyen of Dogri writers, Prof. Ram Nath Shastri who struck a positive note. He wrote:

Jammu

13.9.1984

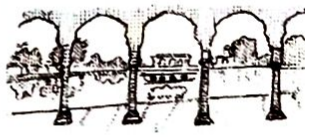
Dear Shivnathji,

There is bound to be a vacuum in your life with the passing of an indivisible part of your life. You are a karmayogi and grief and aloneness can be mitigated only by work. I have known you since 1944 and your life has been a saga of struggle. Why not write your autobiography? You have in ample measure the maturity, the capacity for self-introspection, balanced analysis and organisation and presentation in writing. Recollection of events and co-travellers in your life's journey and memories of sweet and bitter experiences will bring alive the past and fill your present loneliness with liveliness. And Dogri literature will get an important literary work. Thus you will also be repaying an instalment of your debt to the land of your birth and who knows what moments of the time past and how many names will come alive."

In October, I travelled to Badrinath and Gaurikund on the Kedarnath route in the Garhwal Himalayas for immersion of Lakshmi's mortal remains in the sacred waters of Brahmakund at Badrinath Dhaam and the *sangams* or confluences of rivers at Vishnuprayag, Nandaprayag, Karnaprayag, Rudraprayag, Sonaprayag, Devaprayag and Ganga at Rishikesh and spent a week at Shivananda Ashram in the guest house of The Divine Life Society listening to *bhajans*, *keertans* and philosophical discourses of Swami Krishnanandji, the Secretary of the Society. On return to Delhi, I re-ordered my daily routine of a singleton. My association with the Sahitya Akademi and work for its three prestigious projects as Editor (Dogri) brought me in close contact with some of the best creative minds and scholars and academics, some of whom were also very good human beings and I learnt a lot about literature, literary criticism and literary history from them. I attended seminars organised by the Akademi where I found learned papers quite interesting and informative.

There is an entry in my diary:

February 27, 1985: Today was the second day of the National Seminar on "Creativity and Environment" held at the India International Centre auditorium. Met Lokesh Chandra after many many years. He was the first to read his paper. Brilliant performance, but off the mark, away from the theme of the seminar and this made Kannada writer Shiv Ram Karant, a graceful old man with a sense of humour, restive. Kapila Vatsyayan made an extempore spirited speech which was received well. Shiv Ram Karant's and O.N.V. Kurup's papers were down to earth and interesting. Another graceful and towering personality who spoke in the seminar was S. H. Vatsyayan "Agyeya". He wondered whether creative



people should bother about creativity and environment at all – they should concern themselves with creation only. He stated that creativity came to be talked about only during the last thirty years or so and during this period there had been more and more talk about writers confessing their impotence. He felt that there must be some relationship between creativity and impotence. He appeared to be trying to be profound and cryptic but turning out to be vague and egoistic. And his attempts to evade answers to questions seemed to suggest that he was unsure and shallow. Gokak, in his simplicity and straightforwardness, was more convincing and profound and he had another dimension, spirituality, which Agyeya did not seem to have but Agyeya is a striking personality all right with his trimmed white beard, in *kurta-pyjama* and jacket. His friend Ila Dalmia wore a gorgeous *sari* and a *kara*, a bangle, on her wrist.

With Lalit Mangotra

On 2nd March, I was in Jammu to read the first paper in the Dogri Writers' Conference hosted by the Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Literature and Languages and inaugurated by Jag Mohan, the Governor of

Jammu & Kashmir, whose speech in Punjabi English was heavily garnished with Urdu and Punjabi couplets and Punjabi folksongs. I spent over a fortnight in Jammu, meeting in person some of the Dogri writers whom I had known only from their published work and enjoying the hospitality of some new and old friends – breakfast with Baldev Singh Langeh who had published a collection of Dogri essays, lunches with Vishwanath Khajuria and Shyam Lal Sharma, two pioneering writers of Dogri prose and Jagadish S. Sharma, my brother-in-law, Librarian of the Jammu University Library, tea with Yash Sharma's family where I saw for the first time his daughter Seema of the celestial singing voice and Pandit Sansar Chandji, octogenarian painter of the Pahari *Kalam* and dinners with my old class fellows Devaki Nandan Kapur, a flourishing cloth merchant, Bansi Lal, a successful building contractor, N.D. Misra, retired officer of the Jammu & Kashmir Tourist Department and Nilambar Dev Sharma, my predecessor as Convenor (Dogri) in the Sahitya Akademi and savouring the enchantment of mornings in the Ramnagar *Sairgaah*. On the morning of *Holi*, the 7th March, as I reached the *Sairgaah*, I saw the full moon on the western horizon suffusing the entire area with ethereal light, the Sun coming up slowly, first half, then a little more than half, then full – a dull reddish ball over the eastern hills, a bevy of birds passing across and cool breezes coming from that side over the meandering Tawi river.

On the 17th March, I joined the group of members of the Dogri Samstha on a trip to the Maansar Lake where I was treated as the chief guest in its meeting and asked to preside over Dogri Kavi Sammelan. We went in a bus hired for the day via Samba road. The large lake with its limpid waters looked beautiful, the deer park and the

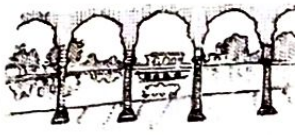
garden complex and the stone-paved 3.5 km. walk around the lake were well laid. Returning in the evening via Sariunsar Lake, we passed through deep valleys – green with clumps of pine trees and abuzz with the cacophony of bird sounds at sunset. The lake, smaller in size, had an island in the centre. The twin lake area was considered the heart of Duggar and one theory about the origin of the word "Duggar" links it to *dvigart*, i.e. the two lakes of Maansar and Sariunsar. Someone pointed to the old residence of Balwant Dev, brother of Raja Ranjit Dev of Jammu who was a great patron of Pahari School of miniature paintings and got several of them executed. The residence, situated on a promontory, now falls in Rajput *mohalla* with Brahmin *mohalla* on the other side. After Sariunsar, it became dark and we were caught in a blizzard, a dust storm blinding in its fury. In Jammu, there was a failure of electricity and total darkness. On 18th March, I returned to Delhi.

From 6th to 8th April 1985, I was in the Qutub Hotel along with one and a half dozen others from different parts of India, called by Prof. Malati Bolar for brainstorming sessions to consider what type of society was desirable, what values needed to be stressed, what difficulties were likely to arise and what strategies would be necessary to overcome them. We started at 6.30 in the morning, listening to Adi Shankaracharya's recorded hymn *Shivo-aham Shivo-aham* sung by a sweet Bengali voice and mind-stilling exercises and continued through the day with Swami Yuktananda, a value engineering expert swamiji of Ramakrishna Mission holding forth on "values" and Prof. Chakraborty of the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta lecturing on "*Guna* Dynamics" and the art of management implying development of suitable equilibrium between the three *gunas* and participants reacting and giving suggestions.

"Abhyutthan", a non-profit voluntary society registered under the Societies Act, and established by a small group of dedicated persons committed to the cause of social transformation and resurgence of values in Indian society, covered the common ideas generated in these sessions in its objectives drafted by Prof. Malati Bolar and the programme of training designed by her. Malati was a scintillating personality, full of energy, vitality and optimism, who had served on the faculty of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, had been Director of Indian Institute of Personnel Planning and Training, Delhi and had developed and conducted two training programmes for Congress Seva Dal volunteers for Rajiv Gandhi and now wanted to do something independently without any official or political support.

Abhyutthan had the following objectives:

a. To improve the quality of life in rural and under-privileged sectors of Indian society;
b. To halt and reverse, to the extent possible, the trend of rural educated youth migrating to cities for employment.
c. To facilitate resurrection and consolidation of values.
d. To work towards creation of a society in which
    a. There is equality of opportunity for employment (self-employment included) and for growth.
    b. Work ethics/culture is valued.
    c. Basic minimum needs are met (focus will have to be on children's nutrition and education, though other aspects of minimum needs will not be ignored).
    d. Technology is employed in harmony with ecology and environment.
    e. All initiatives whether in terms of planning, policy structures, programmes, etc. in whatever



field enable the flowering of the individual personality and potential.

The programme to be implemented through selected rural youth was to emphasise:

a. Mobilisation of rural youth and rural women.
b. Creation of understanding of the existing socio-economic situation, awareness of self and potential and possibilities of improvement of the self and the situation.
c. Promotion of self-reliance among the selected youth and through them among the backward, the poor and the under-privileged in rural areas through various programmes of development.
d. Building up a cadre of change-agents and entrepreneurs in rural management and rural development.
e. Development of values and beliefs like:
    a. The good of the individual is co-extensive with the good of the society and vice versa.
    b. Personal integrity is a basic value – congruence in thought, beliefs, words and deeds.
    c. The individual has to make demands on himself in support of his conviction regardless of the consequences and not compromise for short-term gains.
    d. Relationship among individuals and groups should be based on mutual respect, understanding and enrichment.
    e. Groups should develop the ability to resolve their own issues (through consensus).
    f. Tolerance and openness to experience, ideas and technologies.

Malati asked me to help her in selecting suitable rural youths for the programme and contribute some inputs in the institutional six-week orientation camps to be started in the middle of June. The objectives and

the thrust of the programme of "Abhyutthan" interested me and offered an opportunity to have an entirely different kind of experience and I readily agreed to join her.

In the meantime, I got absorbed in reading about the life and philosophy of J. Krishnamurti in *The Years of Fulfilment* by Mary Lutyens. I loved Krishnamurti and every word he pronounced with such passion. Aldous Huxley had written about him, "Listening to him was like listening to a discourse of the Buddha – such power, such intrinsic authority..." And in the words of Mary Lutyens, "The perfume comes across in his voice, his words, his looks." Bernard Shaw had described J. Krishnamurti "as the most beautiful human being" he ever saw and Venkatachalam described him as, "a radiant spiritual personality, a rare phenomenon, indeed the efflorescence of an age". I copied some of the statements attributed to J. Krishnamurti in my diary, which are reproduced below:

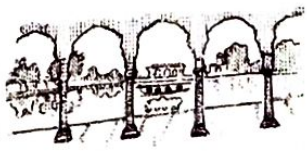
- Truth is a pathless land and you cannot approach it by any religion.
- Truth is the release of the mind from all the burdens of memory – it is constant awareness of life within and without oneself.
- An organisation of a spiritual kind becomes a crutch.
- Immortality is the infinite present.
- Pure love is like the perfume of a rose, given to all.
- Thought is the response of memory, the past and is old.
- In understanding oneself one comes to understand others.
- By denying sex, the so called holy men have starved their hearts and minds; they are dehydrated human beings; they have banished beauty because beauty is associated with woman.

- Beauty is complete order. Universe is complete order.
- There can be no love, no freedom where there is conditioning.
- Your consciousness is what you are.
- Inwardly all are the same and human consciousness is the consciousness of all.
- Communication is the art of listening – with concern, affection, sensitivity.
- There is fear in worship.
- Time is the movement from one point to another and movement is thought. Knowledge is always limited.

In the middle of May, *amaltaas* and *gulmohar* were in full blossom – *amaltaas* burnished gold and *gulmohar* flaming red. I had finished reading *The Years of Fulfilment* and took up Shri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine* and simultaneously, *The Adventure of Consciousness* by Shri Aurobindo's French devotee Sat Prem. About the same time, I decided to attend the summer camp organised by Shri Aurobindo Society, Delhi at "Bana Niwas" in Nainital.

Bana Niwas was the name of the hill donated by someone to Shri Aurobindo Society, Delhi with a large double storeyed building complex with dormitories and some rooms and a courtyard on the top of the hill, with lovely views from its frontage. A meditation hall had been added to it and a little lower down there was a spacious level ground where we collected every morning with our ground-sheets for *yogasanas*. We were about thirty of us in the Camp, a motley crowd like the pilgrims of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* – *Chaachaji*, the builder of the Delhi branch of Shri Aurobindo Society, with flowing grey beard, beautiful hands and long fingers restless in his cap, full of anecdotes and full of life, past eighty, suffering from asthma, Taraji, his daughter with short hair in green track suit, energetic and dedicated

organiser of the camp, loved and respected by all, Suneeta, the marathon runner, hobbling on her fractured foot with or without crutches, active, managing administration and housekeeping, a good mimic and stage performer, Chhoteynarayan, always ready for a talk in his Bihari accent, easy going, fluent with quotes and Sanskrit *slokas*, fond of *jalebis*, K.N. Varma from Rewa, a good speaker in Hindi, logical, persuasive, full of words, but rather loquacious, a good sport, fond of trekking, Sveta, the little girl who turned ten in the camp celebrating with lemon drops distributed to all, composed, intelligent, with prodigious memory, the German plump girl Sophia and Austrian Karl-Heinz who meditated together in the playground throughout the night and were always seen together, disciples of some Radhaswami *guru*, Don, the Welsh interested in the Buddhist meditation, Ratilal, 70, the leader of the Gujarat group of elders and women devotees, who joined us in scrambling and trekking to "Tiffin Top", Ashwini Thirani, a Marwari businessman and his *vrata-niyam* crazy wife, Sanjay, the young lawyer who had read J. Krishnamurti, Nalin Dholakia who had been private secretary to the Maharani of Rewa and who taught music, Pushpa Behn, a college teacher and her boyfriend Takht Singh who held hands while trekking, Indubhai with his acupressure demonstrations, Pathak, an advocate from Ahmedabad and his secretary Gita Behn, youthful, adventurous, bright who lived independently in a flat of her own back in Gujarat, Cuckoo Mathur (with her two daughters) and Karuna Abrol who sang bhajans in the meditation hall, Inder Lamba who always wanted to show off his muscles and his poetic creations to girls, Prabha, daughter-in-law of K.P. Srinivasa Iyengar who had been Vice-President of the Sahitya Akademi, Anand Mohan Narula, an old colleague of mine and



Vidya Joshi, graceful, charming and cultivated professor of English in Delhi University who had done her masters in English literature along with Lakshmi from Jodhpur.

The ten days programme in sylvan setting of Nature gave me enough to make the camp worthwhile and enjoyable, to stretch my body and mind, to understand Shri Aurobindo's philosophy of Integral Yoga better and to read a couple of interesting books from the Bana Niwas Library and Reading Room, a special feature of which was total absence of newspapers and magazines except the Society's magazine, *Mother India*. Living close to Nature in forest like environment and breathing clean air was refreshing and invigorating. While the sight of a snake sunning itself on your path and slinking away into wayside bushes on your approach or pulling back to avoid trampling a big black scorpion sent a current of scare down one's spine, walking leisurely under the shade of tall trees, hearing the symphony of bird sounds, seeing the birds skipping in the branches and watching some apes with long tails sitting on rocks like yogis lost in meditation generated waves of joy in the heart.

I trekked to China Peak in drizzle, to Tiffin Top and Snow View in partial rain and to Land's End from where there were lovely views of Khurpa Lake and surrounding landscape. I also took advantage of a rock climbing course being run by the Mountaineering Institute close by and completed it successfully at 60. I imbibed Shri Aurobindo's philosophy of Integral Yoga from lectures on the subject, which emphasized the primacy of Divine Shakti and suggested a way of transformation of consciousness through a process of *ascent* by aspiration towards the Divine Shakti and *descent* of grace of the Divine Shakti in response. The book that I enjoyed reading aloud was Adi Shankaracharya's

Soundaryalahiri in mellifluous and sonorous Sanskrit steeped in fervour of *bhakti*, devotion, celebrating the concept of Shiva and Shakti creating, sustaining and destroying life – a continuous *leela*. The other book I read was *Love and Devotion* by Nitya Chaitanya Yati; it dealt with Jai Deva's *Gita Govinda* and poems of St. John of the Cross, which had some meaningful *haikus* like these:

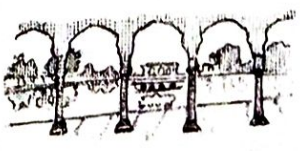
Every single star
Is quivering now with light
O how bitter cold!

When I think of it
As my snow
How light it is
On my bamboo hat!

Hear the sweet cuckoo
Through the big bamboo thicket
The full moon filters.

The last haiku above struck me as full of deep meaning. The song of the cuckoo gathers our mind and beckons us to look into the heavens. What we see is not the cuckoo but moonlight. What confronts us is not the moon but its essence filtering through the big bamboo thicket of our own mind. Finally what matters is neither what we have heard or seen but the delight which unites us, what we intuitively recognise as full or perfect – the quality of light and the fullness of joy.

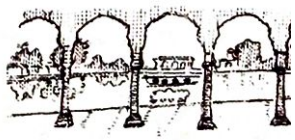
Back in the scorching heat of June in Delhi, I mostly stayed in, reading something, mainly spiritual stuff – *Samaadhi* by Mauni Sadhu, *Taoism* by Blofield, some unread issues of *The Divine Life*. Mauni Sadhu wrote about the need for purification of consciousness at all the three planes – physical, mental and astral or



vital, "the three envelopes of consciousness" and discrimination between them. *Tao* was described as a softly lucent ocean of pure void, a pearly mist. Born of the ocean two dragons sport intertwined – the male bright as the Sun with fiery golden scales, master of activity, the female, radiant as the Moon with shining silver scales, adept at passivity. Their intercourse brings forth the rhythms of cyclic change – the movements of planets, the progression of the seasons, the alternation of day and night and so on. *Tao* had the special symbol of *Yin-Yang* like the Cross of Christianity and Swastika of Buddhism. An article in *The Divine Life* described some practical techniques of meditation – like comfortable *aasana* and rhythmic breathing – slow, full, deep inhalations and exhalations which led to reduction in the activity of *Prana* and of the mind and internal meditation – visualisation of the *Ishtadeva*, form of the favourite deity and creation of vibration of *Om* in the system which was the universal vibration. Another book that interested me was *Hindu Sound* by William Corbett and John Moore. It quoted Chhandogya Upanishad: "There is as much in that space within the heart as there is in the whole world outside." It said that sound connects us because it is directly linked with the element Space; that listening to sound rests the mind because it transcends the logical working of mind and touches the heart, that real listening is meditation and if you pay attention and listen, time slows down, 'Me', disappears, 'Me' which is a fiction, an indulgence of the mind – an idle self-concerned mind – closed and spaceless."

The weather improved with rains in July and I started going out sometimes. On 8th July I attended a reception for the Chief Justice Chandrachud which was followed by a lecture by Nani Palkhiwala. Palkhiwala was brilliant, scintillating, illuminating and intellectually

stimulating and revealed a very finely tuned mind with wide reading and remarkable memory. There was not much traffic on the roads those days and it was a pleasure to drive down to the residences of my two very fine, cultured and sophisticated friends – Dr. Kaumudi who had retired as Chairperson of the Tourist Corporation of India and lived alone with a Bengali maidservant in her Greater Kailash-I bungalow very close to the police station and Professor Malati Bolar, a professional human resources management consultant who stayed in a flat in Vasant Enclave with her elderly friend Srinivasan. Kaumudi had been a very close friend of my wife Lakshmi, they had been together in Allahabad University Women's hostel in the 1940s. She had purchased her five hundred square yards plot at the rate of Rs.14 per sq. yard and built her spacious three bedroom bungalow with a garage and a servant quarter above it at a total cost of Rs.80,000 or so. She would ring me up every now and then whenever she felt lonely and solicitous for a chat or to unburden herself of some complaint against her maid or her brothers for whom she had done so much and who were now interested only in grabbing her property or problems with the bank or plumber or electrician or civic services. Sometimes she got nostalgic and spoke about Lakshmi's sincerity, purity, uprightness and clear vision and her moral support to her (Kaumudi) in her moments of crisis. She was under heavy medication and had given up driving. She accompanied me to Connaught Place to help me in selecting a suitable carpet and I escorted her to Mathura and Vrindavana where she had to make an offering at Bankey Bihari Temple on behalf of her physician Dr. Caroli. We visited Dwarkadhish Temple to see Krishnaji in "Golden *Jhoola*" and evening *aarati* on the Yamuna ghats with lamps floating on the water. We also visited various temples in



Vrindavana including the oldest "Govind Temple" in red stone built in 1590 AD and the Brij Institute of Shripaad Baba who was reported to be 120 years old but looked young, barely 50, with dark hair, alert mind and nimble-footed. Malati was sober, with a spiritual dimension, concerned with the matter in hand, living in the moment with total attention. And our talk was about Abhyutthan and its programme all the time.

From August 1985 to March 1987, I remained heavily preoccupied with the ongoing work for the Sahitya Akademi and activities of Abhyutthan – correspondence and travelling in search and selection of suitable youths for its programme, visiting agricultural universities to fix up guest faculty for knowhow and information lectures, contacting *yoga* teachers and speakers on religions and other specific subjects, and participation in the orientation camps. There were other occasional assignments like sitting on interview boards as an Adviser to the Union Public Service Commission for interviews for IAS/IPS and other Central Class One Services, Staff Selection Commission for interviews for non-gazetted posts like those of teachers for schools and inspectors of CBI and Delhi Police, Inspectors of Income Tax & Customs and Banking Service Selection Commission for Bank Officers. In November came a regular assignment as Adviser (P&T) to the 4th Central Pay Commission for six months.

Planning for the Abhyutthan training programme was taken up in August itself. We chose the two states of Gujarat and Karnataka for the first orientation six-weeks camp with ten youths from each of the two States. Malati undertook to make preliminary selection of youths from Gujarat with the help of Prof. Pathak of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad and entrusted a similar selection from Karnataka entirely to

me. For the final selection Malati and I sat together at Baroda and Bangalore. The preliminary search for volunteers from Karnataka took me to Bangalore where I contacted Pandiarajan, the Secretary of FEVORD (Federation of Voluntary Organisations for Rural Development) for a list of non-government voluntary organisations working in the State; to Hunsur where Dr. Pai's NGO was active in a tribal belt; to Melvelli, to Sujulur, to Dharwar and Hubli; to Melkote where I climbed so many steps to see the old temple of Narasinghaswami on a hill with the attached Sanskrit Institute containing rare manuscripts, with a lovely view of the plains and glistening lines and pools of water below formed by a drizzle and met Namboodari in a dimly lit room and listened to the description of his heart-warming work in the area with the help of Liza, a German girl nursing a wound in her foot; and to Bili Ranga Hills through a thickly forested area inhabited by very backward tribes and saw Dr. Sudarshan in a plain pant and bush shirt and Hawaii chappals surveying his remarkable pioneering work in the area – a school with a solar heater fitted hostel, a hospital where he carried out research in specific diseases affecting the tribes, a *gobar*-gas plant, a milk dairy, a bakery, a tailoring training centre and a joss-stick-making training centre. I was greatly impressed by the work of Namboodari and Dr. Sudarshan who promised to sponsor two boys each.

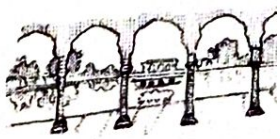
Malati managed to secure financial resources for the six-week orientation camp from the IPCL and the campus of V.T. Krishnamachari Institute of Rural Development at Samyala, about 18 kms. off Baroda from the University authorities at Baroda. The camp started from 8th December 1985 with 18 rural youths, when we organised ourselves at the premises of the camp, dusting, washing, arranging chairs and tables in the

classroom, checking messing arrangements given to a local contractor and so on. The same evening we attended the wedding reception of Has Mukh Shah's daughter where anybody who mattered in Baroda was there – a crowd of well-dressed gentry, bejewelled ladies, with Morarjibhai in spotless white *khadi* towering above them all. From the 9th December, we had a regular schedule – I got up at 4 a.m., awakened the boys and went out for my morning walk in the mellow light of the stars. Joined the prayer meeting at 5, participated in *yogasana* and meditation session from 6 to 7 a.m., sat through some of the value-building, knowhow and human skills sessions, joined the boys for P.T. and sat with them on wooden *patas* for meals. I took the boys to Amul Dairy Complex at Anand, to Kishore Bharati in Rajkot and to Ila Bhat's residence in Ahmedabad where she narrated her experience of organising women for self-employment in the city.

In the meantime, I had joined the Pay Commission where I had a room in the Vigyan Bhawan Annexe and a senior stenographer allotted to me. The Department of Posts & Telegraphs, with a combined staff strength of about six or seven lakhs, had been bifurcated into Departments of Posts and Telecommunications respectively from the 1st January 1985 and there were numerous issues identified by the Commission, those taken up in the memoranda submitted to the Commission by the two Departments and Staff Unions and Officers' Associations of the two departments. My job was to consider each of the issues and give my considered advice on it. My experience as Director (Staff) in the P&T Board and subsequent assignments was useful in handling the job. On the eve of completion of my job in May 1986, I was invited by Justice Shingal, the Chairman of the Pay

Commission, to his residence for a cup of tea. He expressed his appreciation of the objectivity and clarity with which I had expressed my views on issues under consideration. I suggested that there was need for a high-powered committee to have a comprehensive integrated review of the organisation and functioning of the Indian Postal System on the lines of such a Committee for Telecom services in India and the US Postal Service Commission in America. He asked me to leave a note on this matter with the Member Secretary before relinquishing my post. The Commission included my recommendation in its final report and a committee was appointed by the Department of Posts but its composition, approved by Mr. Arjun Singh, the then Communications Minister, left much to be desired. Later, I also worked as Consultant to the Indian Institute of Public Administration on personnel policies of the Department of Posts.

The second Abhyutthan camp for youths from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka and some from Gujarat was scheduled to be held in July-August 1986. The Ecumenical Christian Centre (ECC) in Whitefield, about 18 kms. away from Bangalore was ideal for the camp – well-equipped lecture halls, excellent hostel for trainees, a well-stocked library and reasonably good messing arrangements. For selection of suitable youths for this camp I had to visit different places in Tamil Nadu – Coimbatore and Coonoor, Madras and Madurai – in the hot months of May and June. During this Camp, I came close to Susy Nellithanam, the Director and Ranjit Sathyaraj, the Programme Officer, of the ECC. I found them service-oriented and interested in art and literature and ecumenism. In connection with fixing Kasturbagram near Indore, as the venue of the third camp for youths of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra



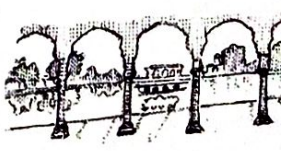
and Rajasthan and for selection of youths for the Camp, I had to travel extensively to Bhopal, Indore, Ujjain, Itarsi, Hoshangabad, Gwalior, Jaipur, Ajmer, Bhilwara and Udaipur.

I enjoyed working with Malati, travelling with her to different places – Baroda, Anand, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Belgaum and Panjim where we arrived famished one afternoon and ordered rice and prawn-curry in a newly opened restaurant and caught a flight from Dabolim to Delhi, Mangalore where Srinivasan and I stayed with her old parents for a week, Coimbatore where we arrived late one evening and rested for the night in the Gandhigram guest house, Hoshangabad where Narmada looked majestic. I also loved interacting with the rural youths. I was impressed by their natural homebred intelligence. It was a new and rewarding experience for me and I learnt so many new things – village environment, different aspects and problems of rural and backward areas, government and non-government schemes for them, types of soils, crops, crop diseases, fertilisers and pesticides, natural farming, horticulture, sericulture, poultry, piggery, cattle rearing, milk cooperatives, artificial insemination, *sulabh shauchalayas*, employment potential and possibilities in different vocations in rural areas and so on. I also learnt a lot about different kinds of skills – human skills, coordinating, entrepreneurial, planning and execution skills, problem solving skills and skills of using technology. It was quite hectic and started telling on my health. I was losing weight and Malati lost her parents and shifted from Delhi to Bangalore. No further camps could therefore be organised.

In December 1987 I had to go to Mysore to participate in the last meeting of the Executive Board

of the Sahitya Akademi. On my way back, I stopped at Bangalore where I shared the platform with eminent *bhasha* writers U.R. Ananthamurthi and Sunil Gangopadhyaya and others in a literary seminar and read my paper on "Literature of the Hour and Literature for All Time." Thereafter I spent the first week of January 1988 in Dialogue House of the Ecumenical Christian Centre at Whitefield as a guest of the Director of the Centre and attended the 25th anniversary celebrations of the Centre founded by Rev. M.A. Thomas in 1963. The Director Susy Nellithanam's welcome speech embodied the spirit of ecumenism. She spoke of the tides of time coming from all, past, present and future and preparing people to be one with the celebration of life on this planet, emphasising the unity of mankind. Important personalities from the Christian world were there – George Fernandes, George Matthew, the Director of the Institute of Social Sciences, Delhi, Dr. E.C.G. Sudarshan, Director, Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Madras, Dr. Mathias, the Archbishop of Bangalore, Rev. M.A. Thomas, Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma, Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church. I liked Dr. Sudarshan's speech packed with references to the Bhagavad-Gita, Narada, Vishwamitra and the anecdote of Bhasmasura.

In the adjoining room in Dialogue House was O.V. Vijayan, the well-known cartoonist, political columnist and Malayalam fiction writer: restless and agile in *mundu*, *kurta*, jacket and shining *chappals*, long hair, drooping moustaches and *khichri* beard white in the middle, thick glasses, double vision, who talked about extremes of *tamas* tendencies and *bhakti* in him, his work and Kerala social structure. And in a small bungalow on the premises of the Centre were Sten Rode, a retired professor of religions in Lunde University and his wife



Beatrice who had been a minister in the Socialist Government of Sweden. In the friendly and pleasant environment of the Centre, I made good friends not only with Susy Nellithanam and the Centre's Programme Secretary Ranjit Sathyaraj but also Vijayan and the Swedish couple. One day Baba Amte came and spoke to us at length about his mission – work for lepers and *Bharat Jodo Abhiyan*. On another day, the Japanese natural farming crusader, Fukowa, came and we saw the results of "do-nothing farming" as he called his method, in a farm in the neighbourhood.

My work in the Sahitya Akademi as Convenor (Dogri) and a member of its Executive Board had been appreciated by Dogri literary organisations and three of them had sponsored my name for the next General Council of the Sahitya Akademi. Om Goswami, a prominent Dogri writer and editor of *Sheeraza* (Dogri) had written to me in December 1987 itself.

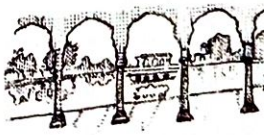
> *"Respected Shivnathji,*
>
> *The work that you have put in for Dogri during the last five years was beyond the capability of any other person. I and my young compatriots want that you should become Convenor (Dogri) and member of the new Executive Board for the next term also. In this lies the good of Dogri. You possess an objective outlook and your way of working is clear and transparent. This can only be good for Dogri and Dogri writers. The seriousness and dedication with which you have worked, have got for Dogri its appropriate place in the projects of the Sahitya Akademi. Otherwise there was every prospect of the language suffering*

by default. I am confident you will give fillip to Dogri language and literature and inspiration and courage to Dogri writers for the next five years also so that Dogri may enter its golden period.

Yours sincerely,
Sd/-
(Om Goswami)"

I was re-elected as Convenor (Dogri) and a member of the Executive Board of the Sahitya Akademi for the second term 1988-1992. Birendra Bhattacharya (Assamese) and Gangadhar Gadgil (Marathi) were elected as President and Vice-President respectively. Others elected to the Executive Board from the northern region were Mhoammed Yusuf Taing (Kashmiri), Amrita Pritam (Punjabi), Vishnu Prabhakar (Hindi), Gopi Chand Narang (Urdu) and Vijaya Daan Detha (Rajasthani). A decision had been taken earlier to bring out a "Literary Digest" of the year's selected literary pieces of bhasha literatures of the four regions in English. Since no other convenor of the northern regional board was prepared to undertake the responsibility of editing the literary digest, I offered to do so and brought out the first two issues of the Digest – selected literary pieces of six languages viz. Kashmiri, Dogri, Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu and Rajasthani as its Chief Editor. I named it *Uttara*.

During my second tenure also I continued to contribute yearly survey articles to *Indian Literature* up to 1991. I also accelerated the work of publications. Twenty books in both Dogri and in English translations were published and twenty more were approved for publication. The books published included English

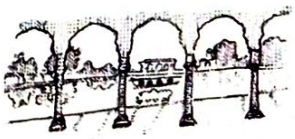


translations of two Sahitya Akademi Award winning books, a selection of Dogri short stories and a monograph in the Makers of Indian Literature series and three anthologies in Dogri – those of Dogri poetry, Dogri essays and literary criticism. I also conducted a translation workshop in translation from English into Dogri with more than a dozen Dogri writers participating.

During the last two years of my tenure in the Sahitya Akademi, I noticed increasing manipulative politicisation of the administration and misuse and arbitrariness in doling out patronage in assignments and even disregard of a well-designed system of Akademi Awards by Convenors of three languages – Urdu, Punjabi and Rajasthani. There were reports about violation of the procedures in the newspapers but they were simply ignored and efforts were made to cover up the irregularity. The old system was also changed, making it more susceptible to arbitrariness and corruption. Some recommendations of the Haksar Committee Report on reforms in the system were rejected. I wrote to the President who did not take any action. I prepared a detailed paper of my observations and distributed its copies to members of the Executive Board in its August 1992 meeting in the hope that the Board would consider them. But nothing happened and I walked out of the meeting, terminating the remaining period of my tenure. Thereafter, it was none of my concern as to how matters relating to Dogri were handled in the Sahitya Akademi. It was for the new Convenor who had managed to worm in by a quid pro quo arrangement with the Secretary, to see. But my relationship with the Sahitya Akademi was not completely snapped. The cause of Dogri was dear to me and I did not hesitate to write about its literature

when I felt like or was required to do so. In 1997, the Akademi published "Two Decades of Dogri Literature – 1971-1990" – a sequel to my "History of Dogri Literature and in 2001, a selection of *Dogri Folk Tales* in English translation. Padma Sachdev approached me to select and translate into English some of her poems. These translations were also published by the Sahitya Akademi in a volume *A Handful of the Sun and Other Poems*. I liked Ved Rahi's short stories and poems and got English translations of his two short stories and two poems published in *Indian Literature*. K. Satchidanandan, the Secretary of the Sahitya Akademi, asked me to contribute two write-ups for two of its publications on the occasion of the Akademi's Golden Jubilee celebrations – *An Anthology of Modern Indian Literature 1975-2000* and *Post-Independence Indian Fiction. A Selection of Contemporary Dogri Poetry* has recently been published by the Sahitya Akademi. Learning about some other channels of introducing Dogri literature to non-Dogri knowing readers, I have contributed a comprehensive article on Dogri literature to *Indian Horizons* – journal of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and two Dogri short stories in English translation to *The Little Magazine* and *Katha Prize Stories Vol. 10* respectively.

My engagement with Abhyutthan was over but my interest in doing something for the handicapped and the under-privileged was still there. At Delhi, I was hooked to "Friends of the Handicapped" a Non-Government Organization (NGO) with a limited charter viz. welfare of the lepers, running a school for the children of leper colony of Delhi, making arrangements for proper treatment of lepers with the help of the Chief Drug Controller and some doctors, helping cured lepers to rehabilitate themselves in



some profitable work like tailoring, arranging their training and marketing their work. I also got a charitable society – Lavi-Lakshmi Sudhi – so named to commemorate my late son Lavi and wife Lakshmi, registered with a modest Corpus Fund of about one and a half lakhs. A major portion of the income from investment of the amount was donated every year to some NGOs doing good work for the under-privileged and some needy individuals and the balance was added to the Corpus Fund. In the course of sixteen years of functioning of the Society about four and a half lakh rupees were donated and the Corpus Fund added up to more than six lakh rupees. Some of the beneficiary NGOs were – Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and Indian Council for Environmental Action, both of Jammu, and Lok Kalyan Samiti, Servants of the People Society, Adarsha Andh Vidyalaya, Venu Charitable Society, Cry, Vanaphool of Delhi, Ramakrishna Mission, Howrah, West Bengal, The Divine Life Society, Rishikesh, Blind Relief Association, Nagpur, Red Cross of Andhra, Ghosal Dangar Adivasi Sangh, Shantiniketan, West Bengal, Purnea Santhal Tribal Shivir. Finding it difficult to manage the affairs and accounts of the Society, it was decided to wind up the Society and transfer the amount of Corpus Fund of the Society to Dogri Samstha, Jammu to be utilised for development of Dogri literature.

Purvasha Apartments of Anandlok Cooperative Group Housing Society in Mayur Vihar across the Yamuna were ready in 1988 and in March 1989 I moved into the flat – B-505 – allotted to me. In 1990-91, Krishna Sobti purchased B-503 and came to stay there. I saw her for the first time when she came to inaugurate a Library-cum-Reading Room started by Purvasha

Welfare Association. I, as the President of the Association, welcomed her. She donated some Hindi books for the Library. In 1991, her long short story *Ai Ladki* appeared in a special issue of *Vartamaan Sahitya*. It was by far the best short story of the collection. When the editor of *Indian Literature* asked me to translate it into English, I took it up as a challenge because Sobti's works were considered well nigh untranslatable. I met her over a cup of tea a couple of times thereafter.

Krishna Sobti

In September 1991, I received a letter from Susy Nellithanam informing me that she and Ranjit Sathyaraj had resigned from the posts of Director and Programme Secretary respectively of the Ecumenical Christian Centre, Whitefield, had got married and moved to a village on the West Coast, purchased a piece of land to live in the lap of Nature and do farming a la Fukuowa. Susy wrote:

> *"The land is good to us, nurturing us and gently teaching us a harmonious way of life. Here we all – birds, animals, insects, humans, plants, flowers, forests and the stream – are one unity. The Earth is patient with us and we live in a state of grace and*

gratitude, overwhelmed by the abundance of Nature. We remember you as a friend on this pilgrimage on earth. Thank you for being what you are. You mean much to us, dear friend and respected elder and we remember you and your gentle ways."

Demolition of Babri Masjid on 6 December 1992 greatly disturbed Krishna Sobti and she called a meeting of prominent writers and intellectuals at her residence in B-503 to plan a powerful protest. Those who attended the meeting included the eminent Urdu writer Qurrat-ul-ain-Hyder, Kannada writer U. R. Ananthamurthi, anthropologist Dr. Shyama Charan Dube, sociologist Prof. Veena Das, Hindi writers Ashok Vajpeyi, Rajendra Yadav, Vijay Mohan Singh and Shaani, Vijaya and Devendra Kohli, journalist Promila Kalhan. I was also there. Even my friend Susy, far away from the event, was horrified to read about the sacrilege. She wrote to me:

"The horror of the 6th December looms large and leads one to believe that our land

Susy Nellithanam & Ranjit Sathyaraj

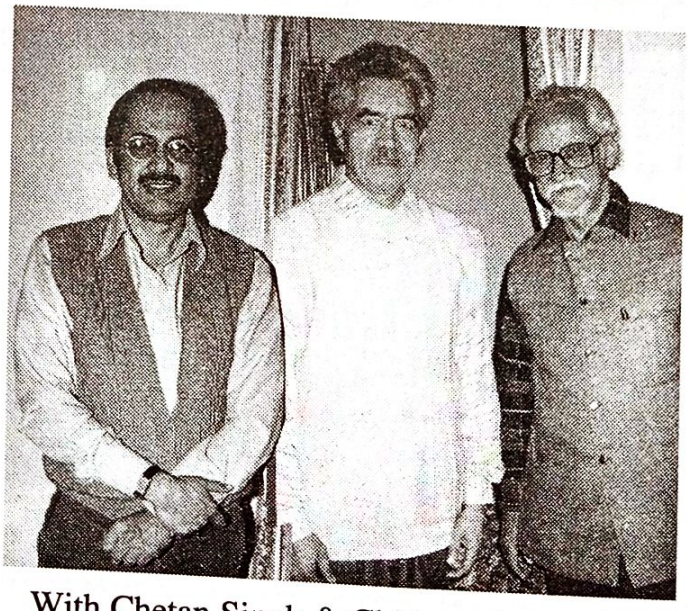
is crumbling into insanity. What gives hope is the presence of people like you, who with your life, your integrity, your commitment, serve as models for us to emulate."

After completing the translation of *Ai Ladki*, I took up Sobti's first novella *Daar Se Bichhudi* for translation into English. I was still at it when she got an invitation from the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla to join there as the National Fellow for two years. She went there in September 1996 and was allotted the Postmaster's House for her residence. In October, when she came to Delhi to participate in some seminar, she asked me to accompany her to Simla to escape dengue fever raging in Delhi and have a change and renew connection with a remnant of my old Department, the spacious, four-room residence of the Postmaster above the Post Office which functioned during the British rule and was now being used as part of the Institute's offices. In the course of about four years of my knowing her, I had found in her person a warm-hearted, genuine human being, with the innocence and untrammelled laughter of a child and wisdom and insights of a highly sophisticated, well-read, alert intellectual; sincere and dependable, caring by nature and concerned about happenings around. My world was limited and shrinking. Her world appeared wide and expanding. I was living an austere life alone. She was also living alone. She perhaps observed a sincere and good human being in me and we made good friends. I agreed to go with her, albeit a bit reluctantly. At the Institute, she was the only National Fellow and enjoyed great respect from the staff and about eighteen regular Fellows and also post-doctorate scholars coming to the Institute for one-month spells under the University Grants Commission

Scheme. She was full of energy and enthusiasm and was looked up to everywhere – in the Guest House dining hall, in the Seminar Room, in the Library and in parties she hosted at the Postmaster's House and those hosted by Prof. Mrinal Miri, the Director of the Institute at his residence, the Squire's Hall at the edge of the hillock with a lovely view of Simla lights and the Church on the Ridge, after dark. During the next

With Mrinal Miri

three years, I spent some time every year as Sobti's guest in the Postmaster's House. I enjoyed interacting with scholars in after-lunch discussions under the hazelnut tree in the lawn of the guesthouse over a cup of tea or coffee and listening to discourses and discussions in



With Chetan Singh & Chidanand Gupta

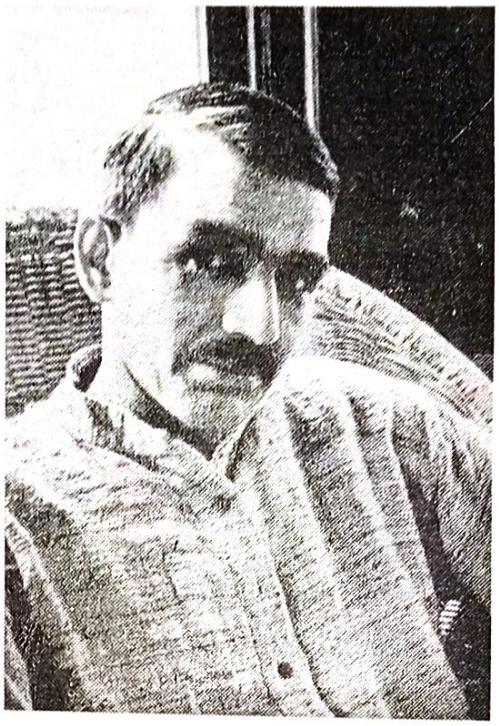
the Seminar Room. I became a temporary member of the well-stocked library of the Institute and read some rare books and journals. I loved my morning and evening walks – going down to the front gate and beyond up to Chaura Maidan or taking the road to Boileauganj Bazaar, hearing the insistent music of cicadas sitting in the tall oak and deodar trees at sunset, picking up tender ferns from the sides of the hills, seeing hosts of monkeys blocking the way and jumping from one tree to another, seeing the Sun's rays filtering through thick foliage of *devdars* and oaks and lighting up pearls of dew on the grassy lawn in the mornings, and the setting Sun embellishing bits of lingering clouds on the tops of hills with lovely colours and moist mists rising from the valley below.

With Sunder & Shirin Ratnakar

In the congenial environment of the Institute, I was also able to do some solid work. I went through fourteen volumes of Dogri Folk Tales in Dogri published by the Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, selected fifty-six tales and translated them into English. Sobti got my handwritten scripts typed on computer. I completed the translation of *Daar Se Bichhudi* and translated jointly with Prof. Jai Dev, Head of the Department of English, Himachal University,

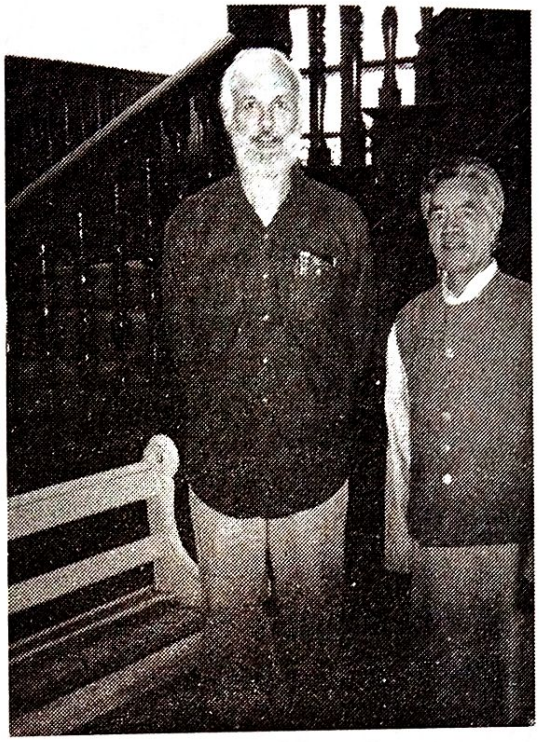
some pages of *Mitro Marjaani* for inclusion in an anthology entitled *Living Literature* published by South Asia Institute of Max Mueller Bhawan, Delhi.

In September 1999, Sobti completed her extended Fellowship and gave a farewell party for the



Jaidev

staff of the Institute ranging from the Director to peons, the head gardener and the head cook of the Institute's Guest House and we bade farewell to the Institute. After return to Delhi, she stayed with me for a few days and then went to Bhopal to live in her one-bed-room flat on the Lake View Estate on Shyamala Hills. There she fell seriously ill. Her friend Satyen Kumar looked after her but she needed full time nursing. When I learnt about her condition, I went to Bhopal, stayed with her for about a month until she was fit enough to travel with me to Delhi. In the course of our friendship, we had developed not only deep understanding of each other but also fondness and keenness to care and do things for each other and we decided to live together at one place.



Mr. Bart

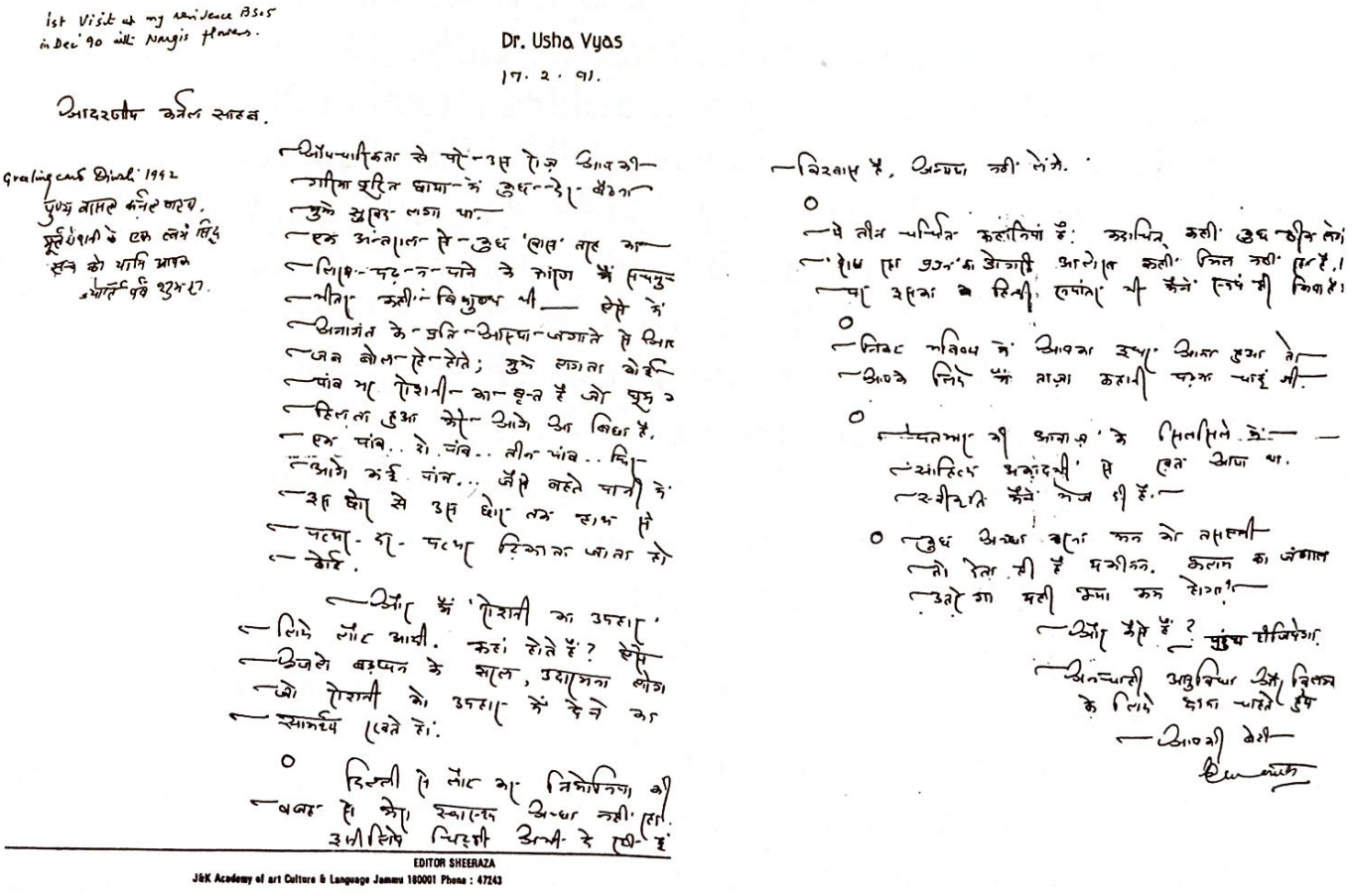
A great lover of books and a producer of superb and significant literary works herself, Sobti has encouraged and inspired me to produce books with my scribbles spread over the years lying scattered. She also insisted that I write my autobiography. As a result of her prodding and my exertions, eleven books have been added to my earlier work, making a total of 20. And she has taken pains to have well-designed covers for my books. She is happy that books bearing my name exceed the number produced by her. But for me, numbers do not really matter. What matters is excellence and she makes sure that whatever she writes bears the stamp of excellence.

She occupies a significant position in intellectual and literary circles and has to go out often to fulfil her engagements. I have withdrawn myself more or less completely from outdoor activities and stay at home, read or write something and occasionally weed out old papers, diaries, letters. There is a letter of Usha Vyas, a Dogri and Hindi writer who was editor of *Sheeraza,* a journal of the Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art,

Culture and Languages. She called on me in February 1991 and then followed up with a letter from Jammu:

("I felt good sitting in your informal but warm presence.Not having been able to read or write something "special" for some time, I was somehow depressed. In a situation like this, your words instilled confidence in me. I felt as though a circle of light had gravitated and spread before me – a step, two steps, three and then several steps, like someone wading through water from one shore to the other, placing stones with his hand.

And I came away with the gift of light. Where? Where does one find simple, large-hearted persons who have the capacity to bestow the gift of light?")



1st visit at my residence BSNL in Dec '90 with Nagji flowers.

Dr. Usha Vyas
17. 2. 91.

आदरणीय कमल साहब.

Greeting card Diwali 1992
पुज्य कमल कपिल साहब,
फूलोंवाली के एक लेखं लिए
सुख की यानि आपके
अभिनंदन पूर्ण शुभकामनाएं.

EDITOR SHEERAZA
J&K Academy of art Culture & Language Jammu 180001 Phone : 47243

I had chanced to read a few poems of an old colleague, eminent Urdu writer Shamsur-Rehman Farooqi, in English translation, in *Indian Literature* and sent him a word of appreciation. He wrote back from Allahabad on 11th May 1996:

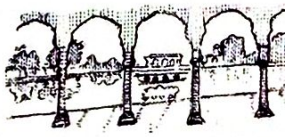
> *"It is the appreciation and encouragement of seniors and poetry lovers like you that has kept me going all these years. I am proud to have had people like you as my mentor."*

Susy Nellithanam's husband Ranjit Sathyaraj wrote to me from Killoor village on the West Coast in February 1997:

> *"On your birthday, on the 18th,*
> *Wishing you all health and happiness.*
> *You have gone beyond personal tragedies*
> *To bring joy and happiness with*
> *The warmth of your being to many.*
> *You have given freely of*
> *Your time, energy and money*
> *That life may be a little different for many.*
> *You have epitomised integrity*
> *Rightness of spirit and humility.*
> *It has been our privilege*
> *To know and love you*
> *And call you friend.*
> *Thank You!!"*

I had given my comments on a collection of poems by Satyen Kumar, one of the finest writers of Hindi fiction. He wrote to me from Bhopal on 3rd June 1999:

> *"Your opinion has always carried a very special meaning for me. There are not many people around these days (specially*



in the so called literary world) who would be so honest, objective and at the same time so encouraging in what they say."

S. Venkatesan, retired Chairman, Board of Customs and Central Excise and ex-Chairman of Appellate Tribunal was a resident in Purvasha Apartments with Mrs. Venkatesan before shifting to Bombay to be with their son. He wrote to me on 21st December 1999:

"I hope you are keeping good health and continuing to make Anandlok a better place to live in with your placid and uplifting presence."

Recently, I sent a copy each of three of my publications i.e. *Dogri Folk Tales*, *Jammu Miscellany* and *Makers of Dogri Literature & Other Essays* to Dr. Karan Singh. He graciously wrote back on 25th July 2006:

"My dear Col. Shivnath,

How kind of you to send me three of your new books. You have indeed rendered yeoman's service to the cause of Dogri and Jammu, for which you deserve warm congratulations ...

Yours sincerely
Sd/-
(Karan Singh)"

I find my companionship with Krishna good and wholesome, mutually supportive and intellectually and emotionally enriching. The intimacy of this companionship has a mature flavour and quality. Born on the same date, in the same year in different climes with different backgrounds and with different working

Dr. Karan Singh
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
(RAJYA SABHA)

सत्यमेव जयते

3, NYAYA MARG
CHANAKYAPURI
NEW DELHI - 110 021

25 July 2006

My dear Col Shivanath,

How kind of you to send me three of your new books. You have indeed rendered yeoman's service to the cause of Dogri and Jammu, for which you deserve warm congratulations.

I hope this finds you and your family well. Perhaps we could meet after the current session of Parliament.

With warm regards,

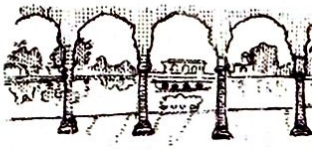
Yours sincerely,

Karan Singh

Col Shivanath
B 505 Purvasha
Anandlok Housing Society
Mayur Vihar I
Delhi 110091

schedules and concepts of time, we are both interested in reading and writing. I am very time conscious and a stickler for routine and work only during the day, for some time before lunch and before afternoon tea. She is time-free, creates timelessness around her when in a writing mood and works mostly in the night. We understand each other and take care not to encroach on each other's space and freedom.

Sometimes we sit at the dining table or in the drawing room or in my study and do some reading – she reading out some exciting piece of her word-weaving, I re-reading some interesting passage from Salman Rushdie or Kiran Nagarkar or talk about some book



read or picture seen long ago or hum a tune of some forgotten song sung by K.L. Sehgal or Pankaj Mullick, which is quite elevating;

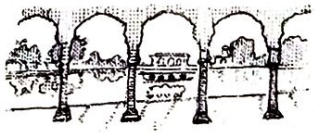
sometimes we recollect and recount some scrap of memory from the past, days of childhood, student days at Lahore or in pre-1980 Delhi; which is refreshing;

more often, we comment on trivialities of daily existence or some news item picked up from the newspaper or seen on the T.V. – the power situation, rampant corruption of politicians and bureaucrats, politics of literature or complain about recurring infirmities, body aches, cramps, funny sensations in limbs, lack of sleep, declining energy level, tyranny of the abdomen (pate ka aatank in Krishna's words) and so on – all "gifts of old age" in the words of U. R. Ananthamurthi, which is quite depressing;

sometimes, at dead of night, I look back at what all I have experienced and a cavalcade of images passes before my eyes – images of places and pictures and dances and exhibitions of art seen and pilgrimages made from "Amarnath Cave" and "Badrinath" and "Jageshwar Jyotirlinga" in the higher Himalayas to "Guruvayoor" and "Madurai" and "Tirupati" in south India, from "Somnath" temple on the West Coast in Gujarat to "Jagannath Puri" on the east coast in Orissa, "Kamakhya Devi" shrine in Assam to "Shrisailam Shiva Peeth" on the bank of Krishna river in Andhra, "Kashi Vishwanath" temple and "Sarnath" in Varanasi, "Mahakal" temple in Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh to "Dwarkadish" temple on the banks of the Yamuna in Mathura in Uttar Pradesh and Krishna temples "Nathdwara" in Rajasthan and "Udupi" in Karnataka, great musicians listened to, numerous books read in English, Hindi, Urdu and Dogri, and some remarkable persons – mystics, intellectuals and writers – with whom I had a chance to

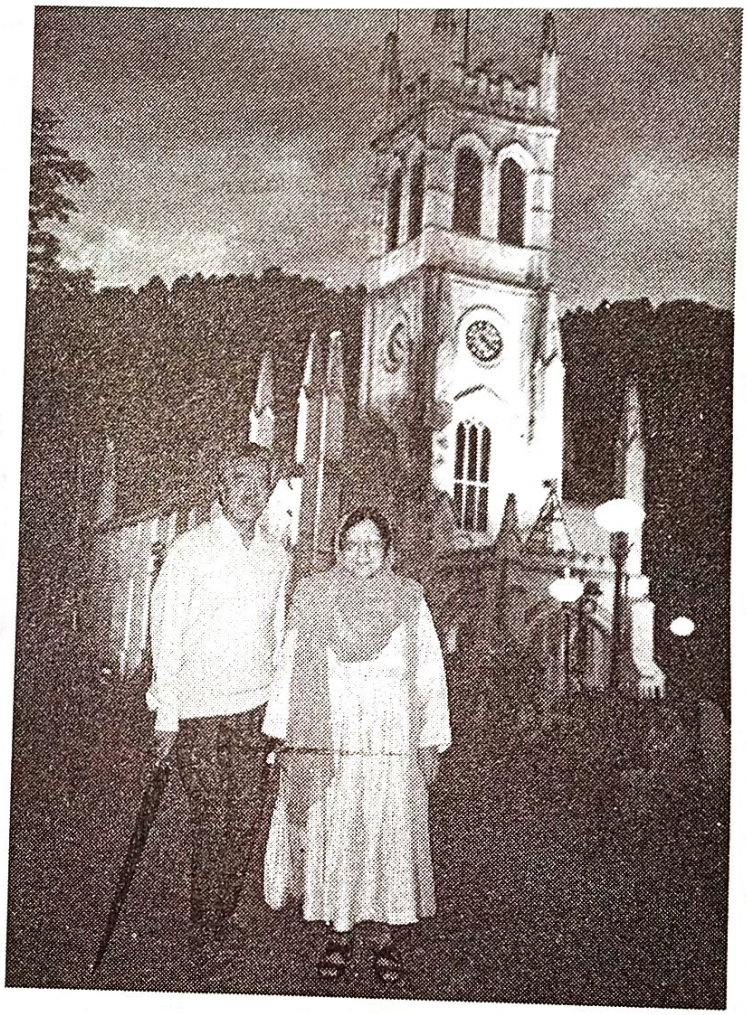
interact. I wonder who this being lying in bed in a flat across the Yamuna in Delhi is. I do not know.

sometimes, in the stillness of the night, lying awake around 3 a.m., I go down memory lane to the city of my birth, Jammu of 1945 – a lovely little capital city bounded by Suryaputri, the Tawi, to the east and a cold water canal drawn from the river Chenab to the west, the Banihal Cart Road leading to Srinagar to the northwest and the three-lanes girder bridge over the Tawi to its south, a city with a population of less than fifty thousand that one could cover on foot from one end to the other, a city of fifty odd temples whose tops covered with yellow metal glistened in the sun, frequented by numerous devotees, with lively, beautiful flower sellers in typical Dogra attire with baskets of flowers at their gates, two or three prominent mosques and an equal number of dargahs of Sufi saints and a gurudwara with perfect communal harmony, a city with three reserved forests around and well-kept drains that kept the city



environment clean, a city with enchanting sights from the Panjpeer shrine and Amar Mahal Palace overlooking the meandering Tawi with views of two temple hills of Mahamaya and Kalka Devi, a city that nurtured the singing and acting talent of young K.L. Sehgal, a city with a leisurely pace of life where seasons came with their characteristic flavours of festivals;

And time passes, or to echo the words of the Sanskrit philosopher poet Bhartrihari, it is not time that passes, we alone pass.



कालो न यातः
वयमेव याताः

(Kaalo na yaatah,
Vayameva yaataah)

Publicationof the author

1. History of Dogri Literature
2. Two decades of Dogri Literature
3. Bhagawat Prasad Sathe-a monograph
4. Churning of the City (*trąnslation*)
5. The bird of gold and other stories (*translation*)
6. Echoes and shadows (a selection of Dogri short stories (*translation*)
7. Dogri Folk Tales (*selection and translation*)
8. Uttara I and II literary digest of Six north Indian languages (*editing*)
9. Listen Girl (*translation of Ai Ladaki by* Krishna Sobti)
10. Home coming (*translation of Daar Se Bichhudi by* Krishna Sobti)
11. An approach to history of post office in India and other essays
12. Jammu Miscellany
13. A Selection of Contemporary Dogri Poetry
14. Power Ploys
15. Makers of Dogri Literature & other essays
16. All in the Dak-some reflections and recollections

(b) In Dogri

1. Dogri Sahitya Da Itihaas
2. Dogri Sahitya Darshan (*co-editing with* H.R. Pandotra)
3. Sahitya Parchol
4. Cheten Di Chitkabari
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